

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



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From a portrait by Oline

Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus.

“A LITTLE WHITE FLOWER”

*O God, who didst inflame with Thy Spirit of Love
the soul of Thy Servant, Teresa, grant that we also
may love Thee and make Thee much loved.*

(100 days. Cardinal Bourne.)

Declaration

Conformably to the Decree of Pope Urban VIII. the Editor declares that in the following pages the word "Saint" and "Miracle" are employed in a purely human sense, and all intention of anticipating the judgment of the Church is utterly disclaimed.

Nihil Obstat

Albanus King, O.P., S.T.L.

Censor Deputatus

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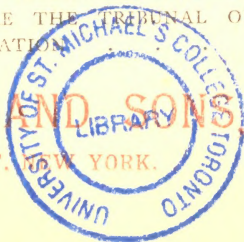
"A LITTLE WHITE FLOWER"
THE STORY OF
SŒUR THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

Defective copy Cf. p. 163-170 etc

A NEW TRANSLATION OF HER AUTOBIOGRAPHY
INCORPORATING THE CHANGES AND ADDITIONS
INSERTED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS INTO
THE DEFINITIVE CARMELITE EDITION OF 1914
BY THOMAS N. TAYLOR, PRIEST OF THE ARCHDIOCESE
OF GLASGOW: WITNESS BEFORE THE TRIBUNAL OF
. . . THE BEATIFICATION

P. J. KENEDY AND SONS

44 BARCLAY STREET, NEW YORK.



THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO THE SERVANT OF GOD,
SŒUR THÉRÈSE, IN THANKSGIVING FOR GRACES
OBTAINED, AND TO HER "PETITE MÈRE," MOTHER
AGNES OF JESUS, IN GRATEFUL MEMORY OF
INNUMERABLE KINDNESSES EXTENDING OVER A
PERIOD OF FIFTEEN YEARS.

JUL 24 1952

AN INDULGENCE of Two Hundred Days was graciously granted by His Eminence Cardinal Bourne, on the Nineteenth of March, Nineteen Hundred and Twelve, to Readers of the Autobiography of Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux.

THE PROFITS of this volume---price eighty cents---will be devoted to the purpose of making the Little Flower of Jesus more widely known, and of thus recruiting her "Legion of Little Victims of Divine Love."

LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS X

To the Prioress of the Carmel of Florence

[On receipt of the Italian translation of the Autobiography]

THIS book, redolent of the virtues of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, and into which it may be said that her whole soul has passed, has been to Us a source of most sweet joy. She has indeed blossomed as a lily, and has shed abroad the lily's pleasing perfume. She has put forth a rich fruitage of Divine Grace, and praised to the full her Lord, and blessed Him in His works.

To Our dear daughter in Christ, Louise of the Sacred Heart, Prioress of the Carmel of Florence, whose filial piety has afforded Us this consolation, and to all the Community of the Carmel, We must lovingly impart Our Blessing, urging them at one and the same time *"to do not slow to imitate her whom it delights them to honour."*

PIUS X.

FROM THE VATICAN.

November 7, 1910.

LETTER OF CARDINAL MERRY DEL VAL

(Secretary of the Congregation of the Holy Office)

ROME, *March 16, 1913.*

DEAR FATHER TAYLOR,

I am very grateful to you for sending me a copy of "Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux"—the Autobiography of the wonderful little Carmelite whose hidden life now revealed to the world is bringing an abundance of light and grace to so many souls, and showing once again that *the weak things of God are stronger than men*; "quod infirmum est Dei, fortius est hominibus." . . . ¹

His Holiness desires me to say that He sends you a special blessing. . . .

R. CARD. MERRY DEL VAL.

LETTER OF CARDINAL AMETTE

(Archbishop of Paris, formerly Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux)

To the Prioress of the Carmel of Lisieux

BAYEUX, *May 24, 1899.*

DEAR REVEREND MOTHER,—The Holy Ghost has said: "*It is good to hide the secret of a king; but honourable to reveal and confess the works of God.*" ²

Doubtless you remembered this saying when you determined to give to the world *The Story of a Soul*. ³ Your beloved Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus

¹ Cor. xii. 5.

² Tobias xii. 7.

³ *L'Histoire d'une Ame*: the title of the French edition of the Life Letters, and Poems of Sœur Thérèse. *L'Histoire d'une Ame* was the title chosen for the complete French edition of her writings, of which edition alone over 150,000 copies have been published since 1899.

entrusted you with her inmost secrets, and those secrets, set in writing for her Mother alone, you deem it a duty not to confine to Carmel. Wise judges have agreed with you that to reveal the marvellous workings of grace in that heroic and innocent soul would be to give glory to Our Divine Lord.

Your hopes have not been deceived, as the rapid sale of the first edition testifies. The perfumes of Paradise, which these pages of your Angel breathe, have delighted the souls permitted to enjoy them, and have, beyond all doubt, drawn more than one to follow after her Divine Spouse. I ask Our Lord to bless the new edition more abundantly still.

LEO ADOLPHUS,
Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux.

LETTER OF CARDINAL MERCIER

(Archbishop of Malines and Primate of Belgium)

To the Prioress of the Carmel of Florence

MALINES, *Easter, 1910.*

DEAR REVEREND MOTHER,—You have asked for a few words to serve as preface to your Italian translation of that touching book, *The Story of a Soul*, written by Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus, Carmelite of Lisieux. It is a pleasure to have my name associated with that of the Archbishop of Florence—my esteemed friend—and to share with him the privilege of blessing your work. But what can I say of that most lovable child which has not been already said, with a delicacy of touch I dare not hope to rival, by Cardinal Gotti, Cardinal Amette and many another?

The soul whose tender beauty you unveil to your readers is like the hyacinth and other springtide blossoms whose fragrance makes us forget the frosts of winter; and by the shafts of light in which they are bathed we rise to the resplendent sun that, in a little time, will turn the harvest to gold. No one can read a Life such as that of Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus without the soul expanding, without a feeling of peace, and without experiencing more keenly the attractions of Divine Love.

Where can we better follow the divinely triumphant action of the Spirit of God? We see how this innocent child fears to wound God's fatherly Heart, how she dedicates herself completely to His service, and becomes a victim for the Church and for souls. We note the unerring judgment that discerns the true from the false, the good from the bad; the strength of will leading a girl of fifteen to heroic virtue. The Counsellor from on High has indeed guided each step of this lofty soul, all steeped in grace, whose every thought was illumined by our holy Faith. Always and everywhere true wisdom kept her in union with God, and love for God was her one source of inspiration.

Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord—these gifts abound in the heart of Thérèse, and through their human tabernacle, translucent as crystal, these marvellous graces shine forth.

God bless your zealous work, and grant that this beautiful Life may be spread far and wide. . . .

DESIRÉ CARDINAL MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

PREFACE.

AS we become acquainted with the histories of those in whom, in long succession, God has been pleased to show forth examples of holiness of life, it seems as if every phase of human existence had in the history of the Church received its consecration as a power to bring men nearer to their Maker. But there is no limit to the types of sanctity which the Creator is pleased to unfold before His creatures. To many, on reading for the first time the story of Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face, it came almost as a shock to find a very youthful member of an austere Order, strictly retired from the world, engaged in hidden prayer and mortification, appearing before us to reveal to the whole world the wonders of the close intimacy of friendship to which her Divine Spouse had been pleased to call her. Certainly this way by which Sœur Thérèse was led is not the normal life of Carmel, nor hers the manner whereby most Carmelites are called to accomplish the wondrous apostolate of intercession to which their lives are given. But no less certain is it that, in her particular case, her work for God and her apostolate were not to be confined between the walls of her religious home, or to be limited by her few years on earth.

In the first place, we know that it was by obedience that the record of God's dealings with her soul were set down in writing. And, again, the long tale of graces granted in such strange profusion through her intercession, is proof sufficient that it was not without Divine permission and guidance that the history of her special and peculiar vocation has become the property of all

Catholics in every land. It is for God to keep, and for Him to make known the secrets of His Love for men. And in the case of Sœur Thérèse it has been His Will to divulge His secrets in most generous consideration for our needs.

What are the hidden treasures which Our Divine Master thus reveals to us through His chosen servant?

It is the old story of simplicity in God's service, of the perfect accomplishment of small recurring duties, of trustful confidence in Him who made, and has redeemed and sanctified us. Humility, self-effacement, obedience, hiddenness, unfaltering charity, with all the self-control and constant effort that they imply, are written on every page of the history of this little Saint. And, as we turn its pages, the lesson is borne in upon our souls that there is no surer nor safer way of pleasing Our Father who is in Heaven than by remaining ever as little children in His sight. Doubtless for many of her clients whose hearts are kindled as they read this book, Sœur Thérèse will obtain, as she has done so often in the past, wonderful gifts for health of soul and body. But may she win for all of us without exception a deep and fruitful conviction of the unchanging truth, that unless we become as little children in the doing of our Heavenly Father's Will, we cannot enter into our Eternal Home.

FRANCIS CARDINAL BOURNE.

Feast of the Presentation of Our Blessed Lady, 1912.

EDITORIAL NOTE.

THE writing of her Autobiography by Sœur Thérèse was an act of obedience. The superiors who imposed on her the task, sought in all simplicity their own edification. But the fragrance of its pages was such that they were advised to give it to the world, and this they did in 1899, two years after the death of Sœur Thérèse, in the odour of sanctity, September 30, 1897. Nearly half-a-million copies of the French edition have been disposed of and the book has been translated into many languages. An English version by Professor Dziewicki introduced Sœur Thérèse to the English-speaking public in 1901.

In August, 1911, the present writer published, under the title "*As Little Children*," an abridgment of the Autobiography which has now—March, 1916—reached its 140th thousand.¹ At the instance of the Carmel of Lisieux, and with the aid of devoted friends, he published at Christmas, 1912, "*Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*," the first complete edition of the Life of the Servant of God. It was a fresh translation of her Autobiography, Letters, and Spiritual Counsels, together with an account of some striking favours ascribed to her intercession. Much fresh material was embodied in the work, which was also richly illustrated. The first large edition of 9,000 copies, abnormally large considering its price of six shillings net, was exhausted in nine months, and the volume, thrice reprinted, has in three years reached its 23rd thousand.

¹ It was issued from the Orphans' Press, Rochdale. Three quarters of a million "Little Flower" leaflets have been printed there, while more than three times that number of English leaflets alone have been published from Lisieux.

It received a warm welcome from those outside the Catholic Church, and has led more than one soul back to the Fold. The following lines from a letter in *The Universe*, signed by the Rev. A. N. Guest, will scarcely surprise the many clients of Sœur Thérèse who have proved her marvellous power with God.¹

THE VICARAGE, STANTONBURY.

"I believe that East and West will one day be joined together again in a visible unity; and to bring about that reunion I count on the influence of the Autobiography of the *Little Flower of Jesus*, that young soul who will soon—let us hope—be canonised by the Church of Rome.

"If we, both Anglicans and Romans, could unite in prayer through the intercession of Sœur Thérèse, and if a novena to her were begun for our reunion, I have no doubt but that it would be as suddenly accomplished as was the conversion of the 3,000 Israelites on the day of Pentecost. I conclude, therefore: let us cease controversy, and betake ourselves to prayer."

In deference to urgent requests the Autobiography is here published apart from the other contents of the large edition. To complete the narrative, however, the story of the birth and death of Sœur Thérèse is reproduced from its pages, together with a letter to her sister, Céline, containing a vigorous defence of the contemplative life.

Those who already possess the above mentioned complete edition may be surprised to find here an entirely

¹ For an account of favours obtained by prayers to the Servant of God, the reader is referred to "*As Little Children*," "*Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*," or the Carmelite volumes of "*Roses*." (Lisieux and Rochdale.)

new translation from the French. The explanation lies in the fact that the Carmel of Lisieux has only now published for the first time the full text of what Sœur Thérèse wrote, and this definitive edition of the Autobiography differs greatly from its predecessors. The many changes, though of minor importance, had to be incorporated into the English text of "*Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*," and the opportunity was taken of retranslating the whole, in order to render the style more flowing and the translation more faithful. In reverting thus to the original, the Carmelites have acted under advice, and the reversion comes appropriately on the occasion of the Introduction of Sœur Thérèse's Cause of Beatification at Rome.

We now know that the Autobiography is based upon three different manuscripts written by the Servant of God at the command of her superiors. The first and longest manuscript, chapters I—IX of the present volume, was addressed in 1895 to Mother Agnes of Jesus, at that time Prioress. Intended solely for one who had been to her a second mother, and for the other sisters who had lavished upon her a wealth of affection in her early years, it was couched in a familiar and intimate style. This manuscript bore the title of "*The Springtime of a Little White Flower*." The second, forming chapters X—XII, is clearly more restrained in tone. It was addressed to Mother Mary of Gonzaga, who had received her into the Order and who in 1896 had been re-elected Prioress. The beautiful chapter XIII of the Autobiography was written in 1897 for Marie her eldest sister (in Carmel, Mary of the Sacred Heart.)

The manuscripts themselves were neither paged nor divided into chapters, and the contents, sometimes

rivalling the finest French prose, were rapidly composed and never revised. In the previous French and English editions it was thought well to publish them as the text of one manuscript, addressed to Mother Mary of Gonzaga. They are now reproduced exactly as they came from the pen of Sœur Thérèse.

Though alone responsible for this new translation, I wish to express here my deep gratitude to those who have so generously lent their aid in the present and in the past, and I conclude with the following extract from a letter of the Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux, in which, after speaking with approval of the new Carmelite edition, he thus continues:

“Men of letters may rejoice at being in a position to explain the special characteristics of the three manuscripts which supplement each other so well. But I am of the number of those who can merely find fresh matter for edification in the childlike confidence and perfect obedience of Sœur Thérèse with regard to the superiors who, in her eyes, successively represented the Divine Authority. This new edition has therefore my entire approval and I repeat the wish I expressed in 1909: that the mystical perfume of her who was the *good odour of Jesus Christ* may delight and sanctify a multitude of souls.”

T. N. T.

Feast of the Annunciation, 1916.

“THE STORY OF THE SPRING-TIME OF A LITTLE WHITE FLOWER.” BEING THE LIFE OF SŒUR THÉRÈSE, WRITTEN BY HERSELF: PRECEDED BY AN ACCOUNT OF HER PARENTAGE AND BIRTH, AND FOLLOWED BY A NARRATIVE OF HER SAINTLY DEATH.

PROLOGUE

PARENTAGE AND BIRTH

THE story of the young Carmelite nun whom the whole Catholic world now styles, as she so often in her simplicity styled herself, "The Little Flower of Jesus," would, in part at least, be unintelligible without an allusion to the garden in which the flower bloomed. "Our Lord," wrote Sœur Thérèse, "would have it spring up in a soil fragrant with purity, where there had already appeared eight fair white lilies." Among her pages of rare beauty, few are more beautiful than those which afford a glimpse into the home of her parents, Louis Martin and Zélie Guérin.

Louis Joseph Stanislaus Martin was born on August 22, 1823, at Bordeaux, while his father was captain in the garrison there. "God has predestined this child for Himself," said the saintly Bishop of Bordeaux on the occasion of his baptism, and events have proved the truth of the prophecy. From Bordeaux the family came later to Alençon in lower Normandy.

Louis Martin was twenty years old when he climbed the mountain of the Great St. Bernard and presented himself for admission as a postulant at the celebrated monastery. The Prior advised him to go back to Alençon, and on the completion of his course of Latin to return to the cloister. Louis turned his steps homeward, sad at heart, but before long he understood clearly that his life was to be otherwise dedicated to God.

A Little White Flower

A few years after the vain quest of Louis Martin a similar scene was enacted in Alençon itself. Accompanied by her mother, Zélie Guérin presented herself at the Convent of the Sisters of Charity in the hope of gaining admission. For years it had been her desire to share the Sisters' work, but this was not to be. In the interview that followed, the Superioress, guided by the Holy Ghost, as we may well believe, decided that Zélie's vocation was not for the religious life, and that God wanted her in the world. She returned, therefore, to her parents, and to the companionship of her elder sister and her younger brother. Shortly afterwards the gates of the Visitation Convent at Le Mans closed upon her beloved sister, and Zélie's thoughts turned to the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. "O my God!" she repeated constantly, "since I am unworthy to be Thy spouse like my dear sister, I will enter the married state to fulfil Thy holy will. I beseech Thee to make me the mother of many children, and to grant that all of them may be consecrated to Thee."

God heard her prayer, and His finger was visible in the circumstances which led to her becoming the wife of Louis Martin, in the Church of Notre Dame, Alençon, July 12, 1858. Like Tobias and his spouse, they were joined in matrimony—"solely for the love of children, in whom God's Name might be blessed for ever and ever." Nine flowers bloomed in this garden. Of these, four were transplanted to Paradise before their buds had quite unfolded, while five were gathered into God's gardens upon earth—one entering the Visitation Convent in Caen, the others the Carmelite Convent in Lisieux.

1 Cf. Tobias viii. 9.

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From the cradle all were dedicated to Mary Immaculate, and all received her name : Marie Louise, Marie Pauline, Marie Léonie, Marie Hélène (who died at the age of four and a half), Marie Joseph Louis, Marie Joseph Jean Baptiste, Marie Céline, Marie Mélanie Thérèse (who died when three months old), and lastly, *Marie Françoise Thérèse*.

The boys were the fruit of prayers and tears. After the birth of four girls, their parents entreated St. Joseph to obtain for them the favour of a son who should become a priest and a missionary. Marie Joseph was given to them, but only five months had run their course when Heaven demanded what it had lent.

Then followed more urgent novenas, for the grandeur of the priesthood was so well understood by those Christian parents that their hearts coveted it eagerly. At all costs the family must have a Priest of the Lord—an apostle, perhaps even a martyr, one who should dispense God's Word, God's Bread, God's Pardon. But, *the thoughts of the Lord are not our thoughts, nor are His ways ours.*¹ Another Joseph was born, and with him hope grew strong. Nine months, however, had scarcely passed when he joined his little brother. They did not ask again, but if the veil of the future could have been lifted, their hearts would have been comforted. A daughter was to be vouchsafed them who would be invoked by the missionaries of the Gospel through the length and breadth of Africa, India and China, and who would be a herald of Divine Love, not to one land alone, but to all the ends of the earth. They themselves were destined to shine as apostles. In the

¹ Isaiah Lv. 8.

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dedication of the Portuguese edition of the Autobiography, we read these significant words of an eminent Jesuit:

"To the sacred memory of Louis Joseph Stanislaus Martin and of Zélie Guérin, the blessed parents of Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus, an example to all Christian parents."

Every morning saw them at Mass; together they knelt at the Holy Table. They strictly observed the fasts and abstinences of the Church, kept Sunday as a day of complete rest from work in spite of the remonstrance of friends, and found in pious reading their most delightful recreation. They prayed in common, after the touching example of Captain Martin, whose devout recital of the *Our Father* brought tears to the eyes of his hearers. The great Christian virtues flourished in their home. Wealth did not bring luxury in its train, and the simplicity of olden days characterised the household.

"How mistaken are the great majority of men!" Madame Martin used often to say. "If they are rich, they desire honours; and if these are obtained, they are still unhappy; for that heart can never be satisfied which seeks anything but God." Her whole ambition as a mother was directed towards Heaven. "Four of my children are already safely there," she once wrote, "and the others also will go to that Kingdom, enriched with greater merit because of a more prolonged combat."

Charity in all its forms was a natural outlet to the piety of these simple hearts. Husband and wife set aside each year a considerable portion of their income

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for the work of the Propagation of the Faith. They relieved poor persons in distress, ministering to them with their own hands. On one occasion Louis Martin was seen to raise a drunken man from the ground in a busy thoroughfare, take his bag of tools, support him on his arm, and lead him home. Another time, seeing in a railway station a poor and starving epileptic without the means to return to his distant home, he was so touched with pity that he took off his hat, and, placing in it an alms, proceeded to beg from the passengers on behalf of the sufferer. Money poured in, and it was with a heart brimming over with gratitude that the sick man blessed his benefactor.

He never allowed human respect to overrule his Christian instincts. In whatever company he might be, he always saluted the Blessed Sacrament when passing a church; nor did he ever meet a priest without paying him a mark of respect. A word from his lips sufficed to silence the blasphemer. In reward for his virtues, God showered even temporal blessings on His faithful servant. In 1871 he was able to give up his business as a jeweller and retire to 42 Rue St. Blaise.

It was in this house that the ninth child of Louis Martin and Zélie Guérin was born, January 2, 1873. Marie and Pauline were at home for the Christmas holidays from the Visitation Convent at Le Mans. There was, it is true, a slight disappointment that the future priest was still denied them, but it quickly passed, and the little one was regarded as a special gift from Heaven. Two days later she was carried to the church of Notre Dame to receive the Sacrament of Baptism; her eldest sister, Marie, was her godmother, and she

A Little White Flower

received the name of *Marie Françoise Thérèse*.¹ Soon, however, the tender bud drooped on its delicate stem. "You should pray to St. Francis de Sales," wrote her aunt from the convent at Le Mans, "and promise, if the child recover, to call her by her second name, Frances." This was a sword-thrust for the mother. Leaning over the cradle of her Thérèse, she exclaimed: "Only when the last hope has gone, will I promise to call her Frances."

The gentle St. Francis waived his claim in favour of the reformer of the Carmelite Order: the child recovered, and so retained her name of Thérèse. Sorrow, however, was mixed with the mother's joy when she found it necessary to send her to a foster-mother in the country. There the little one thrived, and in fourteen months had gained strength sufficient to allow of her being brought back to the Rue St. Blaise. A tablet on the balcony of No. 42 now informs the passers-by that here was born a certain Carmelite, by name, Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face. The pilgrims to the spot where the Little Flower first saw the light of day, are not so numerous as those to the grave where her remains await their glorious resurrection. They may nevertheless be numbered by thousands.

After the death of his wife the father of Thérèse left Alençon for Lisieux, a Norman town lying amid the apple orchards of the valley of the Touques. Lisieux is deeply interesting by reason of its old churches of St. Jacques and St. Pierre, and its specimens of quaint houses, some of which date from the twelfth century.

¹ The baptismal entry, with its numerous signatures, is shown to visitors, and a tablet in the baptistery of the beautiful Gothic church tells the pilgrim that here the "Little Queen" was made a child of God. [Ed.]

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In 1877, the inhabitants little thought that their town would be rendered illustrious through its new citizen, Marie Thérèse Martin. She entered its Carmel at the age of 15, and died there almost unknown, on September 30, 1897, in her twenty-fifth year.

Only 17 years later her Cause of Beatification was introduced at Rome, while the entire Catholic world is inhaling the sweet odour of her holiness and marvelling at the multitude, literally innumerable, of spiritual and temporal favours ascribed to her intercession. Each day a vast correspondence brings from all quarters of the globe to the Carmel of Lisieux news of cures, conversions, souls uplifted to God, holy deaths, apparitions, mysterious perfumes, and signs of protection accorded by God's Servant in countless most gracious ways—to great and simple, to sinner and saint, to those outside the Fold as well as to those within, and in a special way to little children and God's beloved poor—in a word, tidings of the foretold *Shower of Roses*, and of the ample fulfilment of her promise to “spend her Heaven in doing good on earth.”

It will not be amiss to say a word here about the brother and sister of Madame Martin. Her sister, in religion, Sister Marie Dosithea, led at Le Mans a life so holy that she was cited by Dom Guéranger, perhaps the most distinguished Benedictine of the nineteenth century, as the model of a perfect nun. By her own confession, from earliest childhood she had never been guilty of the smallest deliberate fault. She died on February 24, 1877. It was in the convent made fragrant by her aunt's extraordinary holiness that Pauline Martin, the “little Mother” of Thérèse and for five years her Prioress, received her education. And

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if the Little Flower imbibed the liturgical spirit from her teachers, the daughters of St. Benedict in Lisieux, so that she could say before her death: "I do not think it is possible for anyone to have desired more than I did to assist properly at choir and to recite perfectly the Divine Office"—may we not trace to Le Mans the sweet spirit of St. Francis de Sales which pervades the pages of the *Autobiography*?

With the brother of Zélie Guérin the reader will make acquaintance in the narrative of Sœur Thérèse. He was a chemist in Lisieux, and it was there that his daughter Jeanne Guérin married Dr. La Néele and his younger child Marie entered Carmel. Foreign missionaries had a warm-hearted friend in M. Guérin, who for his charities was made godfather to an African king. God called him to his abundant reward in 1909.

The pen of Sœur Thérèse herself must now take up the narrative. It will do so in words that not only tell of love but set the heart on fire, and at the same time lay bare the workings of grace in a soul that "from the age of three never refused God anything." In these inimitable pages, as in those of St. Teresa of Avila or St. John of the Cross, the spirit of poetry is the handmaid of holiness. And this translation sets forth again, in our world-wide English tongue, her world-wide mission, that of preaching the ancient message of God's Merciful Love, and of pointing out the ever new *way* to Him of "confidence and self-surrender."

T. N. T.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

“From the age of three I have never refused our good God anything . . . I have never given Him aught but love, and it is with love He will repay.”

(Sœur Thérèse.)

CHAPTER I

EARLIEST MEMORIES

IT is to you, dearest Mother,¹ to you who are doubly a mother to me, that I am about to confide the story of my soul. When you asked me to write it I feared the task might unsettle me, but Our Lord has deigned to make me understand that by simple obedience I shall please Him best. I begin therefore to sing what must be my eternal song: "*The Mercies of the Lord.*"²

Before setting about my task I knelt before the statue of Our Lady which has given us so many proofs of Our heavenly Mother's loving care. As I knelt I begged of that dear Mother to guide my hand, and so ensure that only what was pleasing to her should find place here. Then, opening the Gospels, my eyes fell on these words: "*Jesus going up into a mountain called unto Him whom He would Himself.*"³

They threw a clear light upon the mystery of my vocation and of my entire life, but above all upon the favours Our Lord has granted to

¹ Her sister Pauline—in religion, Mother Agnes of Jesus. She was then as now (1915) Prioress of the Carmel of Lisieux.

Here begins what Sœur Thérèse in her manuscript calls THE STORY OF THE SPRINGTIME OF A LITTLE WHITE FLOWER. This first portion of the Autobiography, written in 1895, closes with Chapter IX. [EDITOR.]

² Ps. lxxxviii. 1.

³ Mark iii. 13.

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my soul. He does not call those who are worthy, but those whom He will. As St. Paul says: "*God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy.*"¹ So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."²

I often asked myself why God has preferences, why all souls do not receive an equal measure of grace. I was filled with wonder when I saw extraordinary favours showered on sinners such as St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Mary Magdalen, and many others whom He forced, so to speak, to receive His grace. In reading the lives of the Saints, I was surprised to see there were certain privileged souls whom Our Lord favoured from the cradle to the grave, allowing no obstacle in their path which might keep them from mounting towards Him, and preventing sin from soiling the spotless brightness of their baptismal robe. And again it puzzled me why so many poor savages should die without having even heard the name of God.

Our Lord has deigned to explain to me this mystery. He showed me the book of Nature, and I understood that every flower created by Him is beautiful, that the brilliance of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not lessen the perfume of the violet or the sweet simplicity of the daisy. I understood that if all the lowly flowers wished

¹ Cf. Exod. xxxiii. 19.

² Cf. Rom. ix. 16.

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to be roses, Nature would lose her springtide beauty, and the fields would no longer be enamelled with lovely hues.

It is the same in the world of souls, Our Lord's living garden. He has been pleased to create great Saints who may be compared to the lily and the rose; but He has also created lesser ones, who must be content to be daisies or simple violets flowering at His feet, and whose mission is to gladden His divine eyes when He deigns to look down on them: the more joyfully they do His will, the greater is their perfection.

I understood this also, that God's love is made manifest as well in a simple soul which does not resist His grace as in one more highly endowed. In fact, the characteristic of love being self-abasement, were all souls to resemble the holy Doctors who have illumined the Church, it would seem as if God in coming to them did not stoop low enough. He has created, however, the little child who knows nothing and can but utter feeble cries, and the poor savage who has only the natural law to guide him, and it is to their hearts that He deigns to stoop. These are the field flowers whose simplicity charms Him; and by His condescension to them Our Saviour shows His infinite greatness. As the sun shines both on the cedar and on the smallest flower, so the Divine Sun illumines each soul, great or lowly, and all things work together for its good,

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just as in Nature the seasons are so disposed that on the appointed day the humblest daisy shall unfold its petals.

You will wonder, little Mother, to what all this is leading, for I have said nothing yet that sounds like the story of my life; but did you not tell me to write quite freely whatever came into my mind? It will not be a biography, properly so called, that you will find in these pages, but my thoughts about the graces Our Lord has been pleased to bestow on His spouse.

I am now at a time of life when I can look back on the past, for my soul has been refined in the crucible of interior and exterior trials. Now, like a flower after the storm, I can raise my head and see that the words of the Psalm are realised in me: *The Lord is my Shepherd and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture. He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment. He hath converted my soul. He hath led me on the paths of justice for His own Name's sake. For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils for Thou art with me.*"¹

To me He has indeed been always "*compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy.*"² So it gives me great joy, dear Mother, to come to you and sing His unspeakable mercies.

¹ Cf. Ps. xxii. 1-4.

² Ps. cii. 8.

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It is for *you alone*¹ that I write the story of the *Little Flower* gathered by Jesus. This thought will help me to speak freely, without troubling either about style or about the many digressions I shall make; for a mother's heart always understands her child, even when it can only lisp, and therefore I am quite sure of being understood by the little Mother who made ready my heart and offered it to Our Lord.

If a little flower could speak, it seems to me that it would tell quite simply what God had done for it, without hiding any of its gifts. It would not say, under the pretext of humility, that it was not pretty and had not a sweet scent, that the sun had withered its petals or the storm bruised its stem—if it knew such were not the case.

The Flower now telling her tale rejoices in having to publish the wholly undeserved favours of Our Lord. She knows that in herself she had nothing worthy of attracting Him; His mercy it was that filled her with good things—His mercy alone. He allowed her to see the light in a holy soil fragrant with the odour of purity. He caused eight fair white lilies to spring up there before she appeared. In His love He willed to preserve her from the poisoned breath of the world, for hardly had her petals

¹ Italics her own; and so throughout the Autobiography, with the exception of quotations from Holy Scripture. [Ed.]

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unfolded when this good Master transplanted her to the mountain of Carmel, Our Lady's garden of delight.¹

Having summed up in a few words all that God has done for me, I will now relate in detail the story of my childhood. I know that what to others might seem wearisome will not be without charm for my Mother. Besides, the memories I am about to evoke are not mine alone. It was at your side my early years were spent, and together we shared the devoted care of God-fearing parents. May they now bless me tenderly, who am the least of their children, and help me to sing the divine mercies!

Up to the time of my entry into Carmel, the *story of my soul* is marked by three distinct periods.

1. Carmel means *a garden*. Formerly proverbial for its luxuriant beauty, the range of Carmel is still remarkable for its trees and flowers and sweet-smelling plants. Hermits dwelt in its caves at an early date, and during the second half of the 12th century St. Berthold, with ten companions, settled there from Europe near the grotto once occupied by Elias. According to tradition St. Berthold was favoured with an apparition of the prophet. The new-comers built a chapel in honour of the Mother of God, and the "Hermits of Our Lady of Mount Carmel" multiplied so rapidly that in 1208 the Patriarch of Jerusalem, St. Albert, drew up for them a rule of life. Pope Honorius III, who approved of the Dominicans in 1216, and of the Franciscans in 1223, gave his approbation to the Carmelite rule in 1226. A cruel persecution by the Turks, in 1251, compelled the Hermits to return to Europe.

In 1245 Innocent IV raised the eremitical Congregation to the rank of a mendicant Order. That same year, the first general chapter was held at Aylesford in Kent, when an English Carmelite, St. Simon Stock, was elected general. The famous apparition of Our Lady to this Saint took place near Winchester, July 16, 1251. Giving him a brown scapular, she promised that those who died wearing it would not suffer from the eternal flames.

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The first, though short, is not without its rich harvest of memories. It extends from the dawn of reason to the death of our dearly loved Mother: that is to say, till I was four years and eight months old. God, in His goodness, did me the favour of awakening my intelligence when I was still very young, and He has so deeply engraved in my mind the impressions of childhood that past events seem to have happened but yesterday. His design, no doubt, was to make me know and appreciate the excellent mother He had given me, but alas! His divine hand soon took her from me to crown her in Heaven.

Throughout my life it has pleased God to surround me with affection; my earliest recollections are of tender caresses and smiles. And

Another general, Blessed John Soreth, born at Caen, 1420, founded (or affiliated) the first convent of Carmelite nuns, and tried to restore among his friars the strict rule of St. Albert. This triumph was reserved for St. Teresa, like St. Simon a devoted client of Our Lady. She founded the first house of Discalced (i.e. barefooted) Carmelite nuns in 1562, at Avila in Spain. With the aid of St. John of the Cross she extended the reform to the houses of the friars, and her companion, Mother Anne of Jesus, brought the Sisters to Paris in 1604. The Carmel of Lisieux is a foundation from that of Poitiers and dates back to 1838. At present there are in existence about 20 convents of Calced nuns, and over 360 of the Discalced.

The Carmelite enclosure is very strict; in the parlour a veil covers the grille. In addition to other penances the nuns abstain perpetually from flesh-meat, fast upon one meal a day from November 14 till Easter, wear coarse garments, retire to rest on straw pallets about 11-30 p.m. and rise during the greater part of the year at 4-45 a.m. Besides their hours of vocal prayer they spend two hours daily in mental prayer. Their tender devotion to Mary makes the Order her "garden of delight." Amid all the austerity the gaiety of Carmelites is proverbial like the beauty of Carmel itself. "God alone suffices," wrote St. Teresa. [ED.]

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if He allowed so much love to be lavished upon me, He also endowed me with a warm and sensitive heart to return it. Of my affection for Papa and Mamma it would be difficult to convey an idea, and as I think of the thousand ways in which it was shown I cannot suppress a smile.

You have given me the letters which Mamma wrote to you while you were at Le Mans, studying at the Visitation Convent there. They are charming letters inspired by a mother's love and hence too often full of my praise. I shall find it easier to quote from them, though I remember distinctly the events to which they refer. In proof of what I have said about my way of showing affection for my parents, here is what Mamma writes:

"Baby is the dearest little rogue; she will kiss me and at the same time wish me to die. 'Oh, how I wish you would die, dear Mamma!' Astonished at being scolded for saying such a thing, she will answer: 'It is because I want you to go to Heaven, and you say that to get there we must die!' In her outbursts of affection for her Father she wishes him also to die. The dear little thing will hardly ever leave me: she delights in following me about, especially in the garden. If I am not there, she refuses to stay, and is so inconsolable that she has to be brought back to me again. She will not even go upstairs by herself without calling at every step, 'Mamma, Mamma!' and if I forget to answer, 'Yes darling!' she waits where she is and will not move."

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I was nearly three years old when Mamma wrote :

“ Little Thérèse asked me the other day if she would go to Heaven. ‘Yes, if you are good,’ I told her. ‘Oh, Mamma,’ she answered, ‘then if I am not good, shall I go to hell? Well, I know what I will do—I will fly to you in Heaven, and you will hold me tight in your arms, and how could God take me away then?’ I saw by her look she was convinced that God could do nothing to her if she hid herself in my arms.

“Marie loves her little sister very much; indeed she is a child who delights us all. She is extraordinarily outspoken, and it is charming to see her run after me to confess her childish faults: ‘Mamma, I gave Céline a push; I slapped her once; but I will not do it again.’ The moment she has done anything mischievous, everyone must know. Yesterday, without meaning to do so, she tore off a small piece of wall paper; you would have been sorry for her—she wanted to tell her Father immediately. When he came home four hours later and everyone else had forgotten about it, she ran at once to Marie, saying: ‘Tell Papa that I tore the paper,’ and she waited like a criminal for sentence. There is an idea in her little head, that if she accuses herself she will be the more readily forgiven.

Papa’s name fills me with many happy memories. As soon as he came home I would run to meet him, seat myself on his foot, and so he would carry me about through house and garden. Then he would take me in his arms, lift me high up in the air, set me on his shoulder

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and load me with caresses. Mamma used to say, laughingly, that he always did whatever I wanted; and he would answer: "Well, why not? She is the Queen!" Yet I cannot say that he spoilt me. I remember one day while I was merrily swinging he called out as he passed: "Come and give me a kiss, little Queen!" Contrary to my usual custom, I would not stir, and answered pertly: "You must come yourself for it, Papa!" But he wisely took no notice of me.

"You naughty little girl," exclaimed Marie, "to answer Papa so rudely!" Her reproof took effect: I immediately got off the swing and the whole house resounded with my cries. As I hurried upstairs, this time not waiting to call "Mamma!" at every step, my one thought was to find Papa and make my peace with him, which, needless to say, was quickly done.

I could not bear to think I had grieved our beloved parents and I acknowledged my faults instantly, as this little anecdote, related by Mamma, will show :

"One morning before going down-stairs I wanted to kiss Thérèse, but she seemed to be fast asleep and I did not like to wake her. Marie, seeing my hesitation, said: 'I am certain she is only pretending.' I then bent down towards her, and immediately she hid herself under the bed-clothes, saying in the tone of a spoilt child: 'I don't want anyone to look at me.' I was not pleased with her and I told her so. A minute or two

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later I heard her crying and shortly after, to my great surprise, I found her at my side. She had managed to get out of her cot unaided, and stumbling over her long nightdress, had come downstairs barefoot. Her little face was wet with tears : 'Mamma' she said, throwing herself on my knee, 'forgive me for being so naughty!' Pardon was soon granted; I pressed the little angel to my heart, half smothering her with kisses."

I remember also the great affection I had for my dear god-mother,¹ who had just left school. Without appearing to do so, I took in all that I saw and heard, and it seems to me that I judged of things then as I judge of them now. I listened attentively while she taught Céline, and I was very good and obedient so as to obtain the privilege of remaining in the room during lessons. Marie loaded me with little presents which, trifling though they were, afforded me endless pleasure.

I was proud of my two big sisters, and thought of you from morning till night, you seemed so far away. When I was just learning to talk, Mamma would ask me: "What are you thinking about?" and the invariable answer was: "Pauline." Sometimes I heard it said that you would be a nun, and without quite understanding what that meant I used to think: "I too will be a nun." This is one of my earliest recollections, and I

¹ Her eldest sister, Marie Louise, educated at the Visitation Convent of Le Mans. [Ed.]

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have never changed my mind; so you see, when I was only two years old, it was your example that drew me to the Divine Spouse of virgins. What tender memories I could here confide to you, were I not afraid of being carried too far!

Dear Léonie also had a warm place in my heart and my great love for her was fully returned. In the evening, when she came from school, she used to take care of me while everyone else went for a walk, and it seems as though I can still hear the sweet songs she sang to lull me to sleep. I remember perfectly the day of her First Communion, and I remember her companion, the poor child whom Mamma dressed, according to the touching custom of the well-to-do families in Alençon. This child did not leave Léonie throughout all that happy day, and at the grand dinner in the evening she sat in the place of honour. I was too small to stay up for the feast, but, thanks to Papa's goodness, I had my share in it, for when the dessert came round, he himself brought his little Queen a piece of the First Communion cake.

The only one now left to speak of is Céline, the companion of my childhood. My memories of her are so abundant that I do not know how to choose. We understood each other perfectly, though I was much the more forward and lively, and by far the less simple of the two. Here is a letter which will show you, dear Mother, how

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much sweeter Céline was than naughty Thérèse. I was then nearly three, and Céline six and a half.

“Céline is naturally inclined to be good; as to that little puss, Thérèse, one cannot tell how she will turn out, she is still so young and thoughtless. She is a very intelligent child, but has not nearly so sweet a disposition as her sister, and her stubbornness is almost unconquerable. When she has said ‘No’, nothing will make her change; you might leave her all day in the cellar without getting her to say ‘Yes’. She would rather sleep there than do so.”

I had another fault, that of strong self-love, which Mamma did not mention in her letters. Here are a couple of instances :—One day, wishing no doubt to see how far my pride would go, she said smiling : “Thérèse, if you will kiss the ground I will give you a halfpenny.” In those days the sum was a fortune, and in order to gain it I had not far to stoop, for I was so tiny that there was not much distance between my lips and the ground; but my pride was up in arms, and, holding myself erect, I replied: “No, thank you, Mamma, I would rather go without the halfpenny.”

Another time when we were going into the country to see some friends, Mamma told Marie to put on my prettiest frock, but not to let me have bare arms. I did not utter a word, and appeared as indifferent as children of that

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age should be, but in my own mind I said : "I should have looked much prettier with bare arms."

With such a disposition it is clear that had I been brought up by careless parents, I should have become very wicked, and perhaps have lost my soul. But Jesus watched over His little spouse, and turned all her faults to advantage, since by being checked early in life, they became a means of leading her towards perfection. For instance, as I had great self-love and an innate love of good as well, it was enough to tell me once : "You must not do that !" and I never wanted to do it again. With nothing but good example before my eyes, I naturally wished to follow it, and I see with pleasure in my Mother's letters that as I grew older I began to be a greater comfort to her. This is what she writes in 1876:

"Even Thérèse is anxious to practise mortification. Marie has given her little sisters a string of beads on purpose to count their acts of self-denial, and they have really spiritual, but very amusing, conversations together. The other day Céline asked: 'How can God be in such a tiny Host?' and Thérèse answered: 'That is not strange because God is Almighty?' 'And what does Almighty mean?' continued Céline. 'It means', said Thérèse, 'that He can do whatever He likes.' But it is still more amusing to see Thérèse continually putting her hand in her pocket and pulling a bead along the string for every little sacrifice.

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“The children are inseparable and need no other company. Nurse having made Thérèse a present of two bantams, every day after dinner she and Céline sit by the fire playing with them.

“One morning Thérèse climbed out of her cot and made her way into Céline’s; when it was time to dress her, nurse found the little one clinging affectionately to her sister: ‘Oh, Louise!’ she exclaimed, ‘do leave me here! Don’t you see we are just like the little bantams, we cannot be separated!’”

That was true. I could not bear to be away from Céline; I would rather leave my dessert unfinished than let her leave the table without me. The moment she rose I turned round in my high chair and had to get down at once, then we would run off to play together.

I was still too small for the long Sunday services so Mamma stayed at home to look after me. On these occasions I was very good and quiet, walking all the while on tip-toe; but as soon as I heard the door open there was a tremendous outburst of joy. Rushing to my dear little sister I would exclaim: “Oh, Céline! quick, give me the blessed bread!”¹

One day she did not bring any. What was to be done? I could not do without it, for I looked upon this little feast as my Mass. A bright

¹ The custom still prevails in many parts of France of blessing unleavened bread at the Offertory of the Mass and then distributing it to the faithful. It is known as *pain bénit*. This blessing only takes place at the Parochial Mass. [ED.]

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idea struck me and I said: "You have no blessed bread, well then make some!" Céline immediately opened the cupboard, took out the bread, cut off a tiny bit, and, after saying a *Hail Mary* over it with due solemnity, she triumphantly presented it to me. Making the sign of the Cross I ate it most religiously and fancied it tasted exactly like the real blessed bread.

Under the impression, no doubt, that she was too big to play with dolls, Léonie one day brought us a basket filled with their frocks, and other trifles. On these she laid her doll: "Here, dears," she said, "choose whatever you like." Céline looked at it, and took a woollen ball. After a moment's thought I put out my hand, saying: "I choose everything," and I carried off both doll and basket without more ado.

This childish incident sums up, so to speak, the whole of my life. Later on, when the way of perfection was opened out before me, I realised that to become a Saint one must suffer much, one must always choose the most perfect path. I also understood that there are many degrees of holiness, each soul being free to respond to the calls of Our Lord, and to do much or little for His love, in a word, to select amongst the sacrifices He asks. Then also, as in the days of my childhood, I cried out: "My God, I choose everything—I will not be a Saint by halves, I am not afraid of suffering for Thee. One thing only

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do I fear, and that is, to follow my own will. Accept then the offering I make of it, for I choose *all* that Thou wilt!"

But, dear Mother, I am forgetting myself, I must not tell you yet of my girlhood, I am still speaking of the baby of three or four years old.

I remember a dream I had at that age which impressed itself very deeply on my memory. I thought I was walking alone in the garden when, suddenly, I saw near the arbour two hideous little devils dancing with surprising agility on a barrel of lime in spite of the heavy irons attached to their feet. At first they cast fiery glances at me ; then, as though suddenly terrified, I saw them in the twinkling of an eye throw themselves down to the bottom of the barrel. They came out of that somehow or other, only to run and hide in the laundry which opened into the garden. Finding them such cowards, I wanted to know what they were going to do, and overcoming my fears I went to the window. The wretched creatures kept racing about on the tables, quite at a loss how to hide from my gaze. Now and again they would come nearer and peer through the windows with an uneasy air, but finding me still at my post, they would scamper off looking the picture of misery.

Of course this dream was nowise extraordinary; yet I believe Our Lord made use of it to show me that a soul in the state of grace has

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nothing to fear from the devil, who is a coward, and will fly even from the gaze of a little child.

Dear Mother, how happy I was at that age! Not only was I beginning to enjoy life but virtue itself wore a charm. It seems to me that my character was the same then as now, for even at that time I possessed a very large measure of self-control. I made it a practice never to complain when my things were taken, and if at any time I were unjustly accused, I preferred to keep silence rather than attempt an excuse. There was, however, no merit in all this for it came to me quite naturally.

How quickly those sunny years of early childhood passed away, and how sweet the memories they have left behind! I think with delight of the Sunday walks, when our beloved Mother always accompanied us. Indeed I can still feel the vivid and poetic impressions made on my childish heart by the vision of the cornfields studded with cornflowers, poppies, and marguerites. Even at that age I loved far-stretching views, sunlit spaces, and stately trees: in a word all the beauties of nature cast their spell upon me and raised my soul to Heaven.

Often during these walks we met poor people, and I was always the one chosen to give them an alms, which made me feel happy indeed. Sometimes Papa took me home, knowing the way was too long for his little Queen. This was a

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cause of trouble, and to console me Céline would fill her pretty basket with daisies, and give them to me on her return. Truly everything on earth smiled on me; I found flowers strewn at each step, and my naturally happy disposition helped to make life bright. But a new era was about to dawn. I was to be the spouse of Our Lord at so tender an age that it was necessary I should suffer from childhood.

As the early spring flowers begin to come up under the snow and open at the first rays of the sun, so the Little Flower, whose story I am writing, had to pass through the winter of trial and have her delicate cup filled with the dew of tears.

CHAPTER II

A CATHOLIC HOUSEHOLD

ALL the details of Mamma's illness are still fresh in my mind. I remember especially her last weeks on earth, when Céline and I felt like poor little exiles. Every morning a friend came to fetch us, and we spent the day at her house. Once, when we had not had time to say our prayers before starting, my little sister whispered to me on the way: "Must we tell that we have not said our prayers?" "Yes, certainly!" I answered. So, on our arrival Céline timidly made it known to our friend, who replied: "Well, children, you shall say them," and taking us to a large room she left us there. Céline looked at me in amazement. I too was astonished and exclaimed: "This is not like Mamma; she always said our prayers with us." During the day, in spite of all efforts to amuse us, the thought of our dear Mother was constantly in our minds. I remember once when Céline had an apricot given to her, she leant towards me and said: "We will not eat it, I will give it to Mamma." Alas! our beloved Mother was now too ill to eat of any earthly fruit; she would never more be satisfied but

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with the glory of Heaven. There she would drink of the mysterious wine which Jesus, at His Last Supper, promised to share with us in the Kingdom of His Father.

The touching ceremony of Extreme Unction made a deep impression on me. I can see the spot where I knelt, and hear poor Father's sobs. The day after Mamma's death¹ he took me in his arms, saying: "Come, child, kiss your dear Mother for the last time!" and without a word I put my lips to her icy forehead. I do not remember having cried much, and I did not speak to anyone of all that filled my heart. I looked and listened in silence, seeing many things they would have hidden from me.

Once I found myself alone in front of the coffin, which had been placed upright in the passage, and for a long time I stood there lost in contemplation. I had never seen one before, but I knew quite well what it meant. I was so small that I had to lift up my head to see its whole length, and it seemed a huge and melancholy thing.

Fifteen years later I was again standing by a coffin, that of our holy Mother Genevieve,² and

¹ Madame Martin died on the night of August 28, 1877, in her 46th year. She lies buried (since 1894) in the cemetery of Lisioux, by the side of M. Martin and the four children referred to on page 5. [Ed.]

² This holy nun, Mother Genevieve of St. Teresa, was professed at the Carmel of Poitiers and in 1838 was sent to make a foundation

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I was carried back to the days of my childhood. Memories crowded in upon me; it was the same Thérèse who looked on, but she had grown and the coffin seemed small. There was no need to lift up her head, unless to gaze upon Heaven; and Heaven seemed full of joy, for trials had so matured her soul that nothing on earth could make her grieve.

Our Lord did not leave me wholly an orphan. On the day when our dear Mother's remains received the last blessing of the Church, He gave me a second mother and allowed me to choose her freely. We were all five together looking sadly at one another, when our nurse turned pityingly to Céline and to me: "Poor little things!" she said, "you have no longer a mother!" Céline then threw herself into Marie's arms, crying: "Well, you shall be my mother!" Accustomed to imitate Céline, I should undoubtedly have followed her example but that I feared you might be pained, and feel yourself forsaken if you too had not a little daughter. So I looked at you affectionately, and hiding my head on your breast exclaimed in my turn: "And Pauline will be *my* mother!"

at Lisieux. Her name is revered in both these Convents. She practised the most heroic virtue, receiving many supernatural favours from God. On December 5, 1891, she crowned a life of good works by a holy death, being then in her 87th year. A sketch of her career, published by the Carmel at Lisieux, has been translated into English and may be procured through the Orphans' Press. [ED.]

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With Mamma's death, as I have already said, began the second period of my life, the most sorrowful of all, especially after you, my little Mother, had entered Carmel. It lasted for the space of ten years. At the age of fourteen I recovered much of my early gaiety, though at the same time I began to realise the serious side of life.

Immediately after Mamma's death my naturally happy disposition deserted me. You know, dear Mother, how from being lively and demonstrative, I became timid and shy, and so sensitive that a look was often sufficient to make me burst into tears. I could not bear to be noticed, or to meet strangers, and I was only at ease with my dear ones at home. There I was always cherished with the most loving care. Papa's affectionate heart seemed endowed with a mother's love, while you and Marie were no less tender and devoted. If Our Lord had not lavished His sunshine upon His Little Flower, she never could have become acclimatised to this earth. Still too weak to bear either rain or storm, she needed warmth, refreshing dew, and gentle breezes—gifts never denied her, even in the wintry season of trials.

I felt no grief at leaving Alençon¹: children love change and anything out of the common,

¹ M. Martin's object in coming to Lisieux was to bring his girls nearer their mother's brother, M. Guérin, as well as to secure Mme. Guérin's advice in the upbringing of the younger ones. [CARMEL.]

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so I was pleased to come to Lisieux. I remember distinctly the journey and the arrival in the evening at our uncle's house ; I can still see our little cousins Jeanne and Marie waiting with aunt on the doorstep.¹ How touching was the affection all these dear ones showed us !

Next day they took us to our new home, *Les Buissonnets*,² and there everything proved a fresh source of delight. The trim lawn in front of the house, the kitchen garden at the back, the distant view from the large attic windows—all this appealed to my young imagination. Its situation, too, was an added charm, for it stood in a quiet part of the town within easy reach of a beautiful park³ laid out with flowers. This pleasant abode became the scene of many joys, and of family gatherings which I can never forget. Elsewhere, as I have said above, I felt an exile ; I cried and fretted for Mamma ; but here my little heart expanded and I smiled on life once more.

¹ M. Guérin lived quite close to the Church of St. Pierre, above what was then the *Pharmacie Guérin*. [Ed.]

² The house and grounds have been recently restored and may be visited on any afternoon in the week ; a number of souvenirs of Thérèse's childhood are now gathered there. The room where Our Lady appeared to her (see page 67) has been fitted up as an oratory, blessed in May, 1913, by Mgr. Lemonnier. In the garden may be seen one of her miniature altars. [Ed.]

³ *Jardin de l'Etoile*. It is not open to the general public. The pilgrim in search of *Les Buissonnets* goes to the Church of St. Jacques, passes behind St. Pierre, and a little further along the Boulevard Herbet-Fournet, a narrow road to the right, called the *Chemin des Buissonnets*, leads to the house occupied for eleven years by the Servant of God. [Ed.]

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When I woke, you were there to caress me, and at your side I said my prayers. My reading lesson followed later, and I remember that "Heaven" was the first word I could read alone. Lessons over, I ran upstairs, where Papa was generally to be found, and how pleased I was when I had good marks to show !

Each afternoon I went with him for a walk, and made a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in one or other of the churches. It was in this way that I first saw the chapel of our Carmel : "Look, little Queen !" said Papa. "Behind that grating there are holy nuns who are always praying to Almighty God." Little did I think that nine years later I should be amongst them, that in this blessed Carmel I should receive so many graces.

On returning home I learned my lessons, and then spent the rest of the day playing in the garden near Papa. I never cared for dolls, but one of my favourite amusements was making coloured mixtures with seeds and the bark of trees. If the colour turned out pretty I would pour some of the liquid into a dainty little cup and coax Papa to taste. He would at once stop his work, and with a smile pretend to drink.

I was also very fond of flowers, and in a recess which by some good fortune happened to be in the garden wall, I used to make little

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altars and decorate them. When all was ready, I would run and call Papa. To give me pleasure he would appear lost in admiration over the wonderful altar that to me seemed a masterpiece.¹ If I were to tell you of the thousand and one such incidents my memory treasures, I should never stop. How, indeed, could words convey all the love and devotion which that best of fathers lavished upon his little Queen!

Those were supremely happy days when my dear "King," as I called him, went fishing and took me with him. Sometimes I tried my hand with a small rod of my own, but more often I preferred to sit on the grass at some little distance. My reflections would then become really deep, and without knowing what meditation meant, my soul was absorbed in prayer. Far-off sounds wafted towards me on the murmuring breeze, and faint notes of music from the neighbouring town, tinged my thoughts with gentle melancholy. Earth seemed a land of exile and I dreamed of Heaven.

The afternoon passed quickly. It was soon time to turn home, and before packing up I would eat the provisions I had brought in my little basket. Somehow the very slices of bread and jam you had prepared, looked different; in the morning they were so fresh and tempting, and

¹ The tiny monstrance, chalice, missal, cruets, candlesticks, statues, etc. are still carefully treasured at *Les Buissonnets*. [Ed.]

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now they appeared stale and uninviting. Even a trifle such as this made earth seem sadder, and I understood more fully still that only in Heaven will there be unclouded joy.

I remember one day when we were out, how angry clouds darkened the lovely blue sky, and a storm, accompanied by vivid lightning, burst overhead. I looked round on every side so as to lose nothing of the splendid scene. A thunderbolt fell in a field close by, and far from being the least bit frightened, I was overjoyed—God seemed so near. Papa, however, less pleased than his Queen, soon put an end to my rapture, for several meadows separated us from the road, and already the grass and the great tall daisies, taller than I, were sparkling with liquid jewels. Though hampered with his fishing tackle, he carried me in his arms, while I looked down with admiration on the beautiful diamonds below.

I have not, I think, mentioned that in our daily walks at Lisieux, as at Alençon, I often gave alms to the beggars we met by the way. Once we came upon a poor old man, who with great difficulty was dragging himself along on crutches. I went up to him with my penny, but he looked at me long and sadly, then smiling sorrowfully he refused my alms. I cannot express what I felt; I had wished to bring help and comfort and instead I had perhaps only caused

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pain. He must have guessed my thoughts, for when we were some distance off I saw him turn round and smile at me.

Just at that moment Papa bought me a cake, and I longed to run after the old man, thinking that though he did not want money he would be certain to like a cake. Fear held me back, however, and I felt so sorry that it was with difficulty I could repress my tears. Finally I remembered having heard that Our Lord grants all the favours we ask on our First Communion Day. The thought instantly dispelled my grief, and though I was then only six, I resolved to pray for my poor old man when that day should come. Five years later I faithfully kept my resolution, and I have always believed that my childish prayer for this suffering member of Christ has had its blessing and reward.

As I grew older my love of God grew more and more, and I frequently offered Him my heart, using the words Mamma had taught me. I tried very hard to please Him in all my actions, and was most careful never to offend Him. Yet one day I committed a fault which it would be well to mention here; it affords me a good opportunity of humbling myself and I think my contrition for it has been perfect.

It was the month of May, 1878. You considered me too young to attend the May devotions every evening, so I stayed at home



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with Victoire, the maid. We said our prayers together before my little altar, which I had arranged in my own way. Candlesticks, vases, flowers—everything was small. Two wax vestas were quite sufficient to light it up, but on rare occasions and as a surprise, Victoire would treat me to some bits of real candle.

One evening, as we were going to begin our prayers, I asked her to recite the *Memorare* while I lighted up. She tried to begin, then glancing at me she burst out laughing. At the sight of my precious vestas burning away, I again begged her to say the *Memorare* quickly. Again there was silence, broken only by laughter, and with that all my good temper deserted me. I sprang to my feet and stamping furiously, cried out: "Victoire, you naughty thing!" The poor girl ceased laughing at once and stared at me in blank amazement. Then from under her apron, but all too late, she produced the surprise she had in store—two candle-ends. My tears of anger were soon changed into tears of repentance, and full of shame at having shown such temper I firmly resolved it should never occur again.

Shortly after this I made my first confession. What a consoling memory! You had told me, dear Mother, that it was not to a man but to God Himself that I was going to tell my sins, and this truth so impressed me, that I asked you

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seriously if I should tell Father Ducellier¹ I loved him "with my whole heart," since it was God I was going to speak to in his person.

Well instructed as to what I should do, I entered the confessional and knelt down. When the priest opened the slide he saw no one, for I was so small that my head came beneath the elbow-rest. He then bade me stand up. Turning towards him in order to see him better, I made my confession and received absolution in a spirit of the most lively faith, for you had assured me that at that solemn moment the tears of the Holy Child would purify my soul. I remember he exhorted me to be devout to Our Lady, and how I determined to redouble my love for her who already filled so large a place in my heart.

Finally I passed him my Rosary to bless, and came out of the confessional feeling more light-hearted and happy than ever before. It was evening, and as soon as I reached a street-lamp I paused, took the newly blessed Rosary from my pocket, and examined it carefully, turning it over and over. "What are you looking at, Thérèse dear?" you asked. "I am looking to see what a blessed Rosary is like," I answered, and the artless reply afforded you much merriment. The influence of the grace I had received

¹ Now Arch-priest of St. Pierre of Lisieux. This was formerly the Cathedral, and here Thérèse made her first confession. [Ed.]

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remained for a long time with me, and I went afterwards to confession for all the great feasts. These confessions, I may add, filled my young heart with transports of joy.

The Feasts! What precious memories those simple words recall. I loved them; and you knew so well how to explain the mysteries hidden in each one. They were indeed a foretaste of Heaven. Above all, I loved the processions of the Blessed Sacrament. What a joy it was to strew flowers in God's path! But before letting them fall under His feet, I threw them high up in the air, and never was I more happy than when I saw my rose-petals touch the sacred Monstrance.

True, the great feasts came but seldom. Each week, however, brought one very dear to my heart—Sunday.¹ What a glorious day! It was Almighty God's feast and the day of rest. First of all, the whole family went to High Mass, and I remember that before the sermon we had to leave our places, which were a good way from the pulpit, and find seats in the nave. This was not always easy, though everyone was ready to offer a chair to little Thérèse and her Father. My good uncle was always delighted to see us

¹ In the French, *dimanche*, from (*dies*) *dominica*, meaning "The Lord's Day," i.e., the day commemorative of His triumphant Resurrection. Pius X. restored it to its former important position in the ecclesiastical calendar, from which it had long been displaced by the feasts of the Saints. [ED.]

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draw near; he called me his "sunbeam," and used to say that the picture of the venerable old man leading his little daughter by the hand was one that moved him deeply.

For my part I was too engrossed in listening to the preacher to trouble about the attention I attracted. A sermon on the Passion of Our Blessed Lord was the first I thoroughly understood, and I was profoundly touched. I was then five and a half, and from that time I understood and appreciated all the instructions. If St. Teresa were mentioned, Papa would bend down and whisper: "Listen attentively, little Queen, he is speaking of your holy patroness." I really did listen attentively, though I must own that I often looked at Papa more than at the preacher, I read so many things in his noble face. Sometimes his eyes were filled with tears which he strove in vain to keep back; and, as he listened to the eternal truths, he seemed no longer of this world, it was as though his soul had soared to a higher sphere. Alas! his journey was far from its close: long years of suffering lay between him and the hour when his eyes would open upon the beauties of Heaven, and when Our Divine Lord's hand would wipe away the bitter tears of His faithful servant.

But to return to our Sundays. These happy days, which passed all too quickly, had also

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their touch of melancholy. My joy lasted till Compline, but after that a feeling of sadness took possession of me. I thought of the morrow when the daily round of work and lessons would begin again, and feeling like an exile on this earth, I longed for the repose of Heaven, the never ending Sabbath of our true Home. Every Sunday, aunt invited us in turns to spend the evening with her, and I was always glad when my turn came. It was a pleasure to listen to my uncle's conversation, which when serious interested me greatly, and he little knew that I paid such attention. But my pleasure was not unmixed with fear when, taking me on his knee, he would sing "Blue Beard" in a deep loud voice.

At about eight o'clock Papa would come to bring me home, and I remember how on the way I looked up at the stars with untold delight. Orion's belt, like a cluster of diamonds hung in the deep vault overhead, had a wonderful fascination for me because I saw in it a likeness to the letter "T." "Look, Papa!" I would cry, "*my name is written in Heaven!*" Then, no longer wishing to see this dull earth, I would ask him to lead me on, while with head thrown back I gazed unweariedly at the starry skies.

There is much I could tell you about our winter evenings at home. After a game of

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draughts you or Marie used to read aloud from the *Liturgical Year*,¹ and then a few pages from some other instructive and interesting book. During this time I always sat on Papa's knee. When the reading was over, he would rock me gently, my head pillowed on his breast, and would sing in his beautiful voice some soothing melody as if to lull me to sleep.

At length we went upstairs for night prayers. Once again my place was beside our beloved Father, and I had but to look at him to learn how the Saints pray. Then you put me to bed, dear little Mother, and I invariably asked you: "Have I been good to-day? Is God pleased with me? Will the Angels watch over me?" "Yes," was the unfailing reply—were it not, I should have spent the night in tears. You and Marie then kissed me, and little Thérèse was left alone in the dark.

I consider it an important matter that from childhood I was taught to overcome my fears. Occasionally you sent me in the evening to fetch something from a room at the other side of the house, wisely taking no refusal; but for this I should have become nervous, whereas now it is difficult to frighten me. I wonder how you

¹ By the illustrious Dom Guéranger, Abbot of Solesmes. This book, like the *Imitation of Christ*, had a considerable influence upon her spiritual life. There exists an English edition in fifteen volumes, now published at Stanbrook Abbey. [Ed.]

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were able to bring me up with so much tenderness and yet not spoil me. You neither passed over the least fault, nor scolded me without cause, and I knew well that a decision once taken would never be gone back upon.

To you I confided my most intimate thoughts, to you I brought all my childish doubts. One day I expressed surprise that God does not give an equal amount of glory to all the inhabitants of Heaven—I was afraid that they would not all be quite happy. You sent me to fetch Papa's big tumbler, and putting it beside my tiny thimble, filled both with water and asked me which seemed the fuller. I replied that one was as full as the other; it was impossible to pour more water into either of them, for they could not hold it. In this way you made it clear to me that in Heaven the least of the Blessed does not envy the happiness of the greatest; and by bringing the highest mysteries down to the level of my understanding, you gave my soul the food it required.

Each year I gladly welcomed the prize day. Though I was the only candidate, justice was none the less strictly observed, and I never obtained a reward unless it were well merited. My heart beat fast as I listened to my notes and received the prizes, in presence of the whole family, from the hands of my "King." To me it was a picture of Judgment Day!

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Seeing Papa so cheerful, no suspicion of the great trials awaiting him ever crossed my mind, but one day God showed me in an extraordinary vision, a striking picture of the trouble in store.

Papa was away from home and was not expected back till late. It would be about two or three o'clock in the afternoon; the sun shone brightly and all Nature seemed at play. I was alone at a window which looked out on the large kitchen garden, my mind full of pleasant thoughts, when I saw in front of the wash-house opposite, a man dressed exactly like Papa, and of the same height and demeanour, though more bent and aged. I say *aged*, to convey an idea of his general appearance, because, the head being covered with a thick veil, I did not see his face. Slowly and with measured steps he advanced, and passed by my own little garden. Overcome by a feeling of supernatural dread I called out loudly and in frightened tones: "Papa, Papa!" The mysterious person seemed not to hear, and continuing on his way without even turning round, went towards a clump of fir-trees which divided in two the garden walk. I expected to see him reappear beyond the tall firs, but the prophetic vision had vanished.

It was all over in a moment, but it was a moment which impressed itself so deeply upon me that even now, after so many years, the memory of it stands out as distinct as the vision itself.

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You and Marie were in an adjoining room, and at my cry of "Papa!" you were both seized with fear. Concealing her emotion, Marie ran to me, saying: "Why do you call Papa like that when he is at Alençon?" I described what I had just seen, and to reassure me I was told that the maid must have covered her head with her apron on purpose to frighten me.

When questioned, however, Victoire declared she had not left the kitchen, and besides, the truth was deeply engraved on my mind: I had seen a man and that man was exactly like Papa. Together we went to look behind the fir-trees, and finding nothing, you told me to think no more about it. But to banish the thought was impossible. Often and often this mysterious vision rose up before me. Often and often I tried to lift the veil which hid its true meaning, and deep down in my heart lay the conviction that some day it would be fully revealed.

And now you know everything, dear Mother; you know that it was really our darling Father whom God showed me bent with age and bearing on his venerable face and silvery hair the symbol of his terrible trial.¹ As the Adorable

¹ It seems advisable, on account of the vague allusions which occur here and elsewhere, to state what happened to M. Martin. In 1888 he had several attacks of paralysis, which after affecting his limbs, left them each in turn, but continued to affect his mind until the end of his life. For a space of three years it was found necessary to entrust him to the care of strangers. [CARMEL.]

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Face of Jesus was veiled during His Passion, so it was fitting that the face of His humble servant should be veiled during the days of his humiliation, in order that it might shine with greater brilliance in Heaven. How I admire the ways of God in showing us beforehand this precious cross! Even so does a father's love prompt him both to dwell himself with delight on the treasure he has stored up for his children, and to allow those children to catch a stray glimpse of the glorious future he is preparing.

But the thought comes to my mind: "Why did God give this light to a child, who, if she had understood it, would have died of grief?" Why? Here is one of the incomprehensible mysteries we shall only understand in Heaven, where they will be the subject of our eternal admiration. My God, how good Thou art! How well dost Thou suit the trial to our strength!

At that time I had not the courage to think of the possibility of losing Papa, without feeling terrified. One day when he was at the top of a ladder, and I stood close by, he called out: "Move away, little Queen! if I fall I shall hurt you." But my soul rebelled against the idea, and going still nearer to the ladder I determined that should he fall, I would perish with him and so be spared the pain of seeing him die.

How I loved and admired him! When he expounded to me his ideas on the most serious

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matters as if I were a grown-up girl, I would say quite artlessly: "It is certain, Papa, that if you spoke like that to the great men who govern the country, they would make you its king, and France would be happier than she has ever been. But you yourself would be unhappy, for such is the lot of kings, and besides, you would no longer be my king alone, so I am glad they do not know you!"

I was between six and seven when I saw the sea for the first time. I could not turn away my eyes : its majesty, the roaring of the waves, the whole vast spectacle impressed me deeply and spoke to my soul of God's power and greatness. While we were on the beach, a gentleman and his wife, after looking at me for a long time, asked Papa if I were his child, and remarked that I was a very pretty little girl. Papa at once made them a sign not to flatter me, but I was pleased to have overheard, for I did not think I was pretty. You had always been most careful to avoid saying anything before me that might in the least way spoil my childlike simplicity. And because of my perfect confidence in you, I attached little importance to these expressions of admiration, and so gave them no further thought.

That same evening, at the hour when the sun seems to sink into the broad expanse of waters, leaving behind it a trail of light, I sat with you on an unfrequented rock and let my gaze linger

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on this path of splendour. You described it as an image of grace illumining the way of faithful hearts here upon earth. Then I pictured my own soul as a tiny barque, with graceful white sails, floating in the midst of the golden stream, and I determined never to steer it out of the sight of Jesus, so that it might make its way swiftly and tranquilly towards the Heavenly Shore.

CHAPTER III

PAULINE ENTERS CARMEL

I WAS eight and a half when Léonie left school and I took her place at the Abbey.¹ The girls of my class were all older than I; one of them was fourteen, and though not at all clever, she knew how to impose on her companions. Seeing me, in spite of my years, nearly always first in class, and a favourite with all the nuns, she became jealous, and paid me out in a thousand ways. Naturally timid and sensitive, I was unable to defend myself, and took refuge in tears. Neither my little Mother, nor Céline knew of these troubles, and as I was not advanced enough in virtue to rise above them, I suffered a great deal.

Fortunately I went home every evening, and then my spirits revived. I would climb on to Papa's knee, telling him what marks I had, and his caresses drove away all my troubles. It was with the greatest delight that I announced the result of my first composition, for I had obtained full marks. In reward I received a silver coin which I dropped into my money-box for the poor, and nearly every Thursday I was able to

¹ The Benedictine Convent at Lisieux.

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put in another. Such kindnesses were in my case a real necessity: the Little Flower needed to strike its tender roots deeper and deeper into the dearly loved garden of home, for nowhere else could it find the nourishment it required.

Thursday was a holiday at the Abbey, but it was not like the holiday I had with you at *Les Buissonnets*, when I spent most of my time upstairs with Papa. Not knowing how to play like the other children, I felt myself a dull companion, and though I tried my best to do as they did, it was always without success.

After Céline, whom I found almost indispensable, I sought the company of my little cousin Marie, because she left me free to choose the games I liked best. Already we were united in closest affection, as if God were showing us beforehand how one day in Carmel we should both embrace the same religious life.¹

At my uncle's house we often played at being two austere hermits, with only a poor hut, a little patch of corn, and a garden in which to

¹ Marie Guérin entered the Carmel of Lisieux, August 15, 1895, taking the name of Sister Mary of the Eucharist. She was remarkable for her spirit of poverty and her patience through long suffering. "I do not know if I have borne my sufferings well," she said in her last illness, "but it seems as though Thérèse were communicating to me her spirit of self-surrender, and I think her confidence is mine. Oh ! if only like her I could die of love ! It would not be surprising, since I belong to the legion of little victims she asked of God. Mother, if during my agony you see that my sufferings are preventing me from making acts of love, I beseech you to remind me of my desire. I wish to die saying, 'Jesus, I love Thee!'" This desire was realised. Our

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grow a few vegetables. We arranged that while one was attending to active duties the other was engaged in prayer, and thus the hours went by in an unbroken contemplation of divine things. All was gone through in silence with religious gravity and decorum. The make-believe continued even in the street. There the two hermits would say the Rosary, using their fingers to count on, so as not to display their devotion before those who might scoff. One day, however, the hermit Thérèse forgot herself and made a great sign of the Cross before eating a cake given her for lunch, with the result that some worldly folk smiled.

The desire of always doing the same thing sometimes carried us too far. One evening on our way home from school at the Abbey, we bethought ourselves of imitating the modesty of the hermits. "Lead me," I said to Marie, "I am going to shut my eyes." "So am I," came the answer.

circular letter addressed to the other Carmels thus describes her last moments:

"There was in her cell an atmosphere not of this world. One of the Sisters brought her the statue of Our Lady which had smiled on Thérèse, and immediately the expression on the face of our child, already so sweet, became quite transfigured. 'How I love her!'—she exclaimed, stretching forth her hands—'How beautiful she is!'

"As the end drew near, Sister Mary of the Eucharist became more and more ardent in her aspirations of love: 'I do not fear to die! . . . Oh, what peace! . . . We must not dread suffering for He gives strength . . . How I long to die of the love of God! . . . My Jesus, I love Thee! . . . and with these words her soul took its flight to the Divine Bridegroom. She died on April 14, 1905, being then in her 35th year.' [CARMEL.]

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Keeping to the pavement, we had nothing to fear from the passing vehicles and for a brief space all went well. But presently we fell over and upset some boxes that stood at a shop door. Out rushed the angry shopkeeper to pick up his goods, while the would-be hermits, scrambling to their feet, made off at full speed. Their eyes were now wide open, and their ears could not shut themselves to the reproaches of Jeanne, the maid, who seemed quite as much vexed as the shopman.

I have not yet told you of my altered relationship with Céline, and how at Lisieux the positions had been reversed. She was now the little romp, full of mischief, while I had become quite a quiet child, and much too inclined to tears. I stood in need of a champion, an office which dear Céline was ever ready to discharge with the utmost intrepidity. At that early age our hearts were simple and unspoiled. They unfolded like spring flowers swayed by the same soft breezes and gladly welcoming the morning dew. It was our delight to make one another little presents; in fact all our joys were shared in common, as I felt vividly on the happy day of Céline's First Communion.

I was then only seven, and had not as yet begun school at the Abbey. During her last weeks of preparation, you talked with her every evening of the great step she was about to take.

Pauline Enters Carmel

In my own eagerness to prepare, I listened to all you said, and my heart was very sore when I was told to go away because I was still too young. Four years, I thought, was not too long a time to spend in making ready to receive Our Lord. One evening I heard someone say to my happy little sister that from the time of her First Communion she ought to begin an entirely new life. I determined to begin with her, without waiting for my First Communion.

During the preliminary retreat she remained as a boarder at the Abbey. The time seemed to me very long, but at last the great day dawned. What an impression it has left! It was like a foretaste of Our Lord's first entry into my own heart. Many were the graces I received, and I look on it as one of the most beautiful days of my life.

I have gone back a little in order to recall those tender memories, but now I must tell you of the parting that almost broke my heart when Our Lord took you, my little Mother whom I so dearly loved. I told you once I should like to go away with you to a far-off desert, and you replied that you wished it too, and would wait till I should be old enough to set out. I took this impossible promise in earnest, and great was my grief when I overheard you speaking to Marie about your approaching entrance into Carmel. I did not know what this meant,

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but I quite understood you were leaving us to enter a convent, and that you would not wait for Thérèse.

How can I describe the anguish my heart endured! In a flash I beheld life as it really is, full of suffering and constant partings, and I shed most bitter tears. At that time the joy of sacrifice was still unknown to me. I was so weak, that I look back on it as an immense grace not to have died under a trial which to all appearance was far in excess of my strength.

I shall never forget how tenderly you tried to console me, my little Mother. You explained to your child the nature of the religious life, and one evening, while pondering all alone on the picture you had drawn for me, I felt that Carmel was the desert where God wished me also to hide. I felt it so strongly that there was no room for doubt. It was not the dream of an impressionable child, but the certainty of a divine call, and this sensation, which I am unable to describe, brought with it a wonderful peace. Next day I confided my desires to you, and, seeing in them the working of God's Will, you promised to take me soon to interview the Mother Prioress that I might tell her my secret.

A Sunday was chosen for this solemn visit, but great was my embarrassment when I heard we were to have the company of our cousin Marie, who was still young enough to be allowed to see

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the Carmelites.¹ I had then to devise a means of speaking to Mother Prioress alone, and this is what I planned. I told Marie that since we were to have the privilege of seeing Reverend Mother we should be on our best behaviour, and out of politeness should tell her all our little secrets, adding that this would entail our going out of the room in turns. Though Marie did not quite like it, as she had no secrets to confide, she nevertheless accepted the suggestion. In this way I contrived to be alone with Mother Mary of Gonzaga, who listened to my great disclosure, and expressed her belief in my vocation. But she told me postulants² were not received at the age of nine; I must wait until I was sixteen. In spite, therefore, of my eager desire to enter with you, dearest Mother, and make my First Communion on your clothing² day, I had to be resigned to the delay.

1 Carmelites cannot be seen by the ordinary visitor. A dark cloth covers the parlour grating through which conversation takes place, and it is only removed for near relatives, intending postulants, and young children. [Ed.]

2 It may be well to explain here, for those unacquainted with the language of the religious life, that a *postulant* is one who asks to be admitted to a Religious Order; the *postulantship* usually lasts from three months to a year and ends with the *clothing*, or ceremony of exchanging the secular for the religious garb. The *novitiate*, a period of prayer rather than of active work, is then begun, continuing for one year or two years. At its close, the *novice* is admitted to *profession*, that is, to take the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and not unfrequently a fourth vow such as that of serving the sick, labouring for the poor, working on the foreign missions or the like. In the case of nuns the white veil is on that day exchanged for the black, though, as the reader will note, among the Carmelites the taking of the black veil is a separate

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At last, the second of October came round, a day of tears but also of benediction, when Our Lord gathered the first of His flowers from our garden, the chosen one who later on was to become the Mother of her sisters.¹

Whilst our beloved Father, together with my uncle and Marie, climbed the mountain of Carmel to offer his first sacrifice, aunt took me to Mass with Léonie and Céline. We were crying bitterly, and as we entered the church the people gazed at us in surprise, but that did not stay the floods of tears, and I even wondered how the sun could go on shining. Perhaps, dear Mother, you may find that I exaggerate my grief, and I admit that this parting ought not to have upset me so much. But my soul was still far from matured. I had yet to weather many a storm before reaching the haven of peace, and before tasting the delicious fruit of perfect love and absolute self-surrender to God's Will.

ceremony which is performed later. On the occasion of her clothing and profession, a Carmelite wears a crown of roses for the day, in token of her Divine Bridal, and Sœur Thérèse alludes several times to the custom. Among the Poor Clares, the roses are replaced on the profession day by a crown of thorns. In Carmel, the vows—by which a religious becomes the "*Spouse of Christ*"—are taken straightway for life, but in modern Religious Congregations they are at first made temporarily, then renewed at intervals, and only after several years are they made perpetual.

Contrary to received ideas, the difficulty lies in entering rather than in leaving a convent or monastery, the tests of the vocation to a life of self-sacrifice and of close union with God being necessarily very searching. [Ed.]

1 "Pauline" has been several times Prioress of the Carmel of Lisieux, and in 1909 again succeeded to that Office on the death of the young and saintly Mother Mary of St. Angelus of the Child Jesus. [Ed.]

Pauline Enters Carmel

In the afternoon of the same day, October the second, 1882, I saw you behind the parlour grating of Carmel. My dear Pauline was now Sister Agnes of Jesus. How much I suffered in that parlour! It seems to me that because this is the story of my soul, I ought to tell you everything. I must therefore acknowledge that the first pain of our parting was as nothing when compared with what followed. I, who had been accustomed to perfect freedom of intercourse with my little Mother, heart to heart, could now scarcely snatch two or three minutes with Sister Agnes of Jesus at the end of the family visits.¹ I spent these minutes in tears; then, still in tears, I would come away. I did not realise that it was impossible to give to each one of us a half-hour, and that naturally Papa and Marie must have the largest share. I could not understand this, and my heart cried out: "Pauline is lost to me!"

My mind developed too rapidly under the strain, and I soon fell dangerously ill. It was an illness in which Satan assuredly had a hand. Enraged no doubt at this first entry into Carmel, he wished in his jealousy to avenge himself on me for the grave mischief my family was to do him in the future. He little knew, however, that the Queen of Heaven was keeping a faithful

¹ The hours during which visits may be made to the parlour are limited by the Rule. [CARMEL.]

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and affectionate watch from above over her Little Flower, and was making ready to still the tempest just as the frail and delicate stem was on the point of breaking.

At the close of the year 1882, I began to suffer from constant headache, but it was bearable and did not prevent me from continuing my studies, until Easter, 1883, when Papa went to Paris with Marie and Léonie, having confided Céline and myself to the care of our uncle and aunt. One evening, while I was alone with my uncle, he spoke so touchingly of Mamma and of bygone days that I was deeply moved and my tears began to flow. My sensitiveness went to his heart, and, surprised that anyone of my age should speak and feel as I did, he determined to do all in his power to divert my mind during the holidays.

But God had ruled otherwise. That very evening my headache became extremely acute, and I was seized with a strange shivering which lasted all night. My aunt, like a real mother, never left me for a moment, and indeed all through my illness she nursed me with the most tender affection.

How shall I describe our poor Father's grief, when he returned from Paris to find me in this hopeless state. Soon he was convinced that I was going to die ; but Our Lord might have said to him : "*This sickness is not unto death, but*

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*for the glory of God."*¹ For God was glorified in our affliction through the wonderful resignation of our dear Father and sisters, and especially of Marie. How she suffered on my account, and how grateful I am! It was her heart that guided her in forestalling my every need, and truly the wisdom of a motherly heart is far beyond that of the most skilful doctor.

Meanwhile, dear little Mother, your clothing day was drawing near. It was taken for granted that I should not be well enough to attend the ceremony, so, fearing to distress me, no one ever mentioned the matter in my presence. Deep down in my heart, however, I felt that God would on that day vouchsafe me the consolation of being with you again once more. I knew this feast would pass without a cloud, and that Our Lord would not try His spouse by depriving her of the presence of the child whose illness had caused her such sorrow.

And so it fell out. I was able to embrace you, to sit on your knee, to hide myself under your veil, to receive your loving caresses. I feasted my eyes on my dear little Mother, so lovely in her snow-white bridal dress. It was a bright day in a time of dark trial, but the day—or rather the hour—passed all too quickly, and I was soon in the carriage which was to take me away.

¹ John xi. 4.

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On reaching *Les Buissonnets* I was put to bed, though I felt no trace of fatigue. On the morrow, however, I had a serious relapse and I became so ill that, humanly speaking, there was no hope of recovery. I do not know how to describe this extraordinary illness. I said things which I did not think, and I did things as though I were forced to do them in spite of myself. Most of the time I appeared delirious, and yet I am quite certain I was never for one moment deprived of my reason. Sometimes for hours together I remained in a strange kind of swoon, unable to make the slightest movement, and yet hearing everything that was said around me, even when spoken in a whisper. I remember it all so well.

What fears, too, the devil inspired ! Everything frightened me. The bed seemed to be surrounded by awful precipices, and nails in the wall would assume the ghastly appearance of huge, coal-black fingers, filling me with terror and at times making me cry out with fright. Once, whilst Papa stood looking at me in silence, the hat in his hand was suddenly transformed into some horrible shape, and I showed such fear that he turned away sobbing.

But if God allowed the devil to approach in this open way, He also sent His angels of earth to console and to strengthen me. Marie rarely left my side, and, notwithstanding all the

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trouble I gave, she never once betrayed the least sign of weariness. I could not rest while she was away; and during meals, when Victoire took care of me, I cried continually and never ceased calling "Marie, Marie!" It was only if she were going to Mass or to visit you that I would allow her to leave me. On these occasions I did not complain.

Léonie, too, and my little Céline, could not do enough for me. On Sundays, they would remain for hours shut up with a poor child who seemed almost to have lost her reason. My own dear sisters, how much I made you suffer!

Uncle and aunt were also full of affection, and every day, when my aunt came to see me, she would bring me some little gift.¹ During this illness, my love for these dear ones increased more than I can possibly say, and I understood better than ever what our good Father so often said: "Always remember, children, that your uncle and aunt are devoted to you in quite an

¹ Sœur Thérèse repaid her from Heaven. During Madame Guérin's last illness, she made her presence felt on several occasions. One morning the invalid was found very peaceful and happy:—"I have suffered a great deal," she said, "but Thérèse watched tenderly by me all night. I felt her near my bed, and she encouraged me frequently by her caresses." Madame Guérin had lived a most holy life, and her last words were: "Jesus, I love Thee, I offer Thee my life for Thy priests, as did my little Thérèse." She died on February 13, 1900, aged 52.

M. Guérin, who had for many years used his pen in defence of the Church and his fortune in support of good works, also died a holy death, as a Carmelite Tertiary, on September 28, 1909. He was in his 69th year. [CARMEL.]

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exceptional way." In his old age, he himself experienced that devotedness, and now in his turn he will protect and bless those who showed him such care.

In the hours when the pain was less acute, it was my delight to weave garlands of daisies and forget-me-nots for Our Lady's statue. We were then in the lovely month of May, and the earth was adorned with the flowers of Spring. Only the *Little Flower* drooped, and seemed to have faded for ever. But close beside her was a radiant Sun, the miraculous statue of the Queen of Heaven, and towards that glorious Sun the Flower would often turn.

Papa came into my room one morning, evidently in the deepest distress. Going up to Marie, he gave her some gold pieces, and bade her write to Paris for a novena of Masses to be said at the shrine of Our Lady of Victories¹ to obtain the cure of his poor little Queen. His faith and love touched me to the quick, and I longed to get up and tell him I was cured. Alas ! my wishes could not work a miracle, and an extraordinary miracle was necessary if I were to be restored to health. But it was wrought, and my recovery made complete, by the intercession of Our Lady of Victories.

¹ It was in this small Church—once deserted and to-day perhaps the most frequented in Paris—that the saintly Abbé Desgenettes was inspired by Our Lady, in 1836, to establish the Confraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the conversion of sinners. [Ed.]

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One Sunday during the novena Marie went into the garden, leaving me with Léonie who was reading by the window. After a while I began to call in a low voice : " Marie, Marie ! " Accustomed to hear me fret in this way, Léonie took no notice, so I called out louder and Marie came back to me. I distinctly saw her enter, but for the first time I failed to recognise her. I looked piteously round the room and towards the garden, crying again and again : " Marie! Marie! " Words cannot convey the agony of that moment and Marie's suffering was perhaps greater than mine. At last, after many fruitless efforts to make me recognise her, she whispered to Léonie and went away, pale and trembling.

A few minutes later, Léonie carried me to the window overlooking the garden, where I could see Marie walking slowly up and down. She held out her arms to me with a smile, and called tenderly : " Thérèse, my little Thérèse ! " but still I did not know her. This last effort failing, she returned to my room and knelt in tears at the foot of the bed. Then, looking towards the statue, she implored Our Lady's assistance with all the fervour of a mother who begs the life of her child and will not be refused. Léonie and Céline joined in her prayer, and that cry of faith forced the gates of Heaven.

Utterly exhausted, and finding no help on earth, I too sought my heavenly Mother's aid,

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and entreated her with all my heart to have pity on me.

Suddenly the statue became animated and radiantly beautiful—with a divine beauty that no words of mine can ever convey. The look upon Our Lady's face was unspeakably kind and sweet and compassionate, but what penetrated to the very depths of my soul was her gracious smile. Instantly all my pain vanished, my eyes filled, and big tears fell silently, tears of purest heavenly joy.

"Our Blessed Lady has come to me, she has smiled on me! How happy I feel! but I shall tell no one, for if I do, my happiness will leave me." Then, I looked down and recognised Marie, who was watching me lovingly and seemed overcome with emotion, as though she guessed the great favour I had just received.

It was indeed to her and her earnest prayer I owed that wonderful grace—a smile from the Blessed Virgin. When Marie saw me gaze fixedly on the statue, she said to herself: "Thérèse is cured!"¹ It was true. The *Little Flower* had come back to life. A bright ray from her glorious Sun had brought warmth and light, and had

¹ At that moment, her face became as though transfigured. Her whole attitude, as well as her supernatural expression, filled those present with wonder and admiration, leaving no doubt on their minds as to what had taken place—Our Blessed Lady had really appeared to Thérèse during those moments of ecstasy. This statue—referred to on page 1—had already twice appeared as if endowed with life in order to enlighten and console the mother of Thérèse. [CARMEL.]

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delivered her for ever from the cruel enemy : “*The dark winter was now passed, the rain was over and gone,*”¹ and Our Lady’s Flower gathered such strength that five years later she unfolded her petals on the fertile mountain of Carmel.

Marie, as I have said, was fully convinced that the Blessed Virgin, while restoring my bodily health, had granted me some hidden grace ; and when we were alone together, I was unable to resist her tender and pressing enquiries. Astonished to find my secret already known without my having said a word, I told her everything, and, as I had foreseen, my happiness was changed, alas ! into sorrow. For four years the remembrance of the great favour caused me real pain, and it was only in the sanctuary of Our Lady of Victories, at my Mother’s feet, that once again peace was restored to me in all its fulness, as I will tell you later.

The change came about in this way. After Marie had heard my simple and sincere account of the grace I had received, she begged leave to tell the nuns at Carmel, and I did not like to refuse. My first visit there, after my illness, was one of joy at seeing you, my little Mother, clothed in the habit of Our Lady of Carmel. It was a time of bliss for us both, so intensely had we suffered, but although there was much to say, my heart was too full and I could hardly speak.

¹ Cf. Cant. ii. 11.

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Mother Mary of Gonzaga was present, and she gave me many proofs of affection. I saw several other members of the community as well, and all of them, as you will remember, dear Mother, questioned me on my miraculous cure. Some asked if Our Lady had the Infant Jesus in her arms ; others wished to know if Angels were with her. These and further questions troubled and grieved me, and I could only make one answer : " Our Lady looked very beautiful ; I saw her come towards me and smile."

Noticing that the nuns thought something quite different had happened, I imagined that I had, perhaps, been guilty of an untruth. Had I only kept my secret, my happiness, too, would have been secure. But Our Lady allowed this trouble to befall me for the good of my soul ; without it, vanity might have crept into my heart, whereas now I was humbled, and looked on myself with profound contempt. My God, Thou alone knowest all that I suffered.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST COMMUNION

WHILE describing this visit to Carmel, my thoughts are carried back to the first one after you entered. In the course of the morning I had been wondering what name would be given to me later on; I knew there was already a Sister Teresa of Jesus, but I could not bear to lose my beautiful name of Thérèse. Suddenly I thought of the Holy Child to whom I bore such devotion, and I felt how happy I should be if I could be called Teresa of the Child Jesus. I was careful, however, not to tell you of my wish, so what was my surprise and joy at hearing Reverend Mother say: "When you come to us, little one, you will be known as 'Teresa of the Child Jesus.'" This happy coincidence of thought appeared to me as a special mark of favour from the Divine Child.

So far I have said nothing of my predilection for pictures and books, and yet, dearest Mother, I owe some of the best and strongest impressions which have encouraged me in the practice of all that is good, to the beautiful pictures you used to show me. While I looked at them, the hours passed unheeded. "The Little Flower of the Divine Prisoner," for instance, suggested so

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many thoughts that the sight of it would cast me into a kind of ecstasy. I would offer myself to Our Lord to be His little flower, and I longed to dwell in the shadow of the Tabernacle, like the flower in the picture, consoling Him, being affectionately cared for by Him, and finally to be gathered by His hand.

As I was useless at games, I should have preferred to spend all my time reading. Fortunately I had visible guardian angels to guide me in the matter. They chose for me books suitable to my age, that were interesting, yet provided food for both mind and heart. The time set apart for this, my favourite recreation, was carefully limited, for which reason it became an occasion of much self-sacrifice, as no sooner had the time elapsed than I made a point of instantly putting the book down, even in the middle of the most absorbing passage.

With regard to the impressions produced on me by these books, I must frankly own that, in reading certain tales of chivalry, I did not always understand the realities of life; and in my admiration for the patriotic deeds of the heroines of France, especially of the Venerable Joan of Arc, I longed to do what they had done. Then I received what I have always considered one of the greatest graces of my life; for at that age I was not favoured with lights from Heaven as I am now.

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Our Lord made me understand that the only true glory is the glory which lasts for ever; and that to attain it there is no necessity to do brilliant deeds; rather should we hide our good works from the eyes of others, and even from ourselves, so that "*the left hand knows not what the right hand does.*"¹ Then, as I reflected that I was born for great things, and sought the means to attain them, it was made known to me interiorly that my personal glory would never reveal itself before the eyes of men, but would consist in becoming a Saint.

This aspiration may very well appear rash seeing how imperfect I was, and am, even now, after so many years of religious life; yet I still feel the same daring confidence that one day I shall become a *great Saint*. I am not trusting in my own merits, for I have none; but I trust in Him who is Virtue and Holiness itself. It is He alone who, pleased with my poor efforts, will raise me to Himself, and by clothing me with His merits make me a Saint. At that time I did not realise that to become one it is necessary to suffer a great deal; but God soon disclosed this secret to me through the trials I have already related.

To return to my narrative. Three months after my cure, Papa took me away for a change.

¹ Cf. Matt. vi. 3.

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It was a thoroughly enjoyable time and I began to see something of the world. All around me was joy and gladness; I was petted, made much of, admired—in fact, for a whole fortnight, my path was strewn with flowers. True indeed are these words contained in the Book of Wisdom: “*The bewitching of vanity overturneth the innocent mind.*”¹ At ten years of age, the heart is easily fascinated, and I admit that in my case this kind of life had its charms.

The world knows well how to combine its pleasures with the service of God. How little it thinks of death! And yet death has come to many I knew then—young, rich, and happy. I recall to mind their luxurious homes and ask myself where they themselves are now, and what profit they derive from the mansions and estates where I saw them enjoying the good things of life. Then I reflect that “*All is vanity*”² besides loving God and serving Him alone.”³ Perhaps Our Lord, before paying His first visit to my soul, wished me to know something of the world, that I might choose with greater deliberation the way in which I should follow Him.

I shall always remember my First Communion Day as one of unclouded happiness. It seems to me that I could not have been better prepared. You remember, dear Mother, the delightful

¹ Wisdom iv. 12.

² Eccles. i. 2.

³ Inim. I. Ch. i. 3.



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little book¹ you gave me three months before the great event? I found in the much prized manuscript an attractive method which prepared me gradually and thoroughly. It taught me also that, even though I had been long thinking of my First Communion, I must stir up in my heart fresh transports of love and fill it anew with flowers. Every day, therefore, I made a number of little sacrifices and acts of love which were to be transformed into so many flowers: violets or roses, cornflowers, daisies or forget-me-nots—in a word, all nature's blossoms were to form within me a cradle for the Holy Child.

Marie had taken your place as my guide, and every evening I spent a long time with her, eager to hear all she had to say. She was so eloquent that her noble and generous spirit seemed to pass into mine. As the warriors of old trained their children in the profession of arms, so she trained me for the battle of life, and roused my ardour by pointing to the victor's glorious palm. She spoke, too, of the imperishable riches which are within our daily reach, and of the folly of trampling treasures under foot, when one need but stoop to gather them.

Often, indeed, I felt sorry that I alone was listening to her wonderful teaching, for in my

¹ This manuscript of Mother Agnes of Jesus has since been published under the title "Two Months of Preparation for First Communion." The method adopted, which Sœur Thérèse goes on to explain, is still of value, though the age for First Communion has been considerably lowered. [Ed.]

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simplicity I imagined her torrent of eloquence would convert even the most obstinate sinners, with the result that, forsaking the perishable riches of this world, they would seek none but the riches of Heaven.

At this time I should have liked to practise mental prayer, but Marie thought it better I should keep to vocal prayer only, as she considered my piety sufficient for my years. While I was at school at the Abbey, one of the mistresses asked me what I did on holidays when I stayed at home. I answered timidly : "I often hide in a corner of my room, where I can shut myself in with the bed-curtains, and then I think." "But what do you think about?" she said, laughing. "I think about God, about the shortness of life, about eternity—in a word, *I think*." This was not forgotten, and later on my mistress liked to remind me of the time when *I thought*, and used to ask me if I still continued to do so. . . . It is clear to me now that I was then really engaged in mental prayer under the gentle guidance of my Divine Master.

The three months' preparation for my First Communion passed quickly; the time came for my retreat, and during it I stayed at the Abbey. What days of grace! I do not think such joys can be experienced outside a religious house; and the number of children being comparatively small, each one can receive individual

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care. It is in a spirit of the deepest gratitude that I speak here of the true motherly affection our mistresses showed us; though I do not know why, it was nevertheless plain that they watched over me even more carefully than over my companions.

Every night, the first mistress, her little lamp in hand, softly drew aside my bed curtains and kissed me tenderly. She showed me such affection that, touched by her kindness, I said to her one night: "Mother, I love you so much that I am going to tell you a great secret." I then took from under my pillow the precious book you had given me and handed it to her. She opened it with care, and, looking through it attentively, told me how privileged I was. Several times during the retreat, the truth came home to me that very few motherless children are as affectionately dealt with as I was then.

I followed most closely Father Domin's instructions, taking copious notes. As for my own thoughts, I did not put any of them in writing, for I knew I should remember them quite well. And so it proved.

With what delight I followed the Divine Office, just as the nuns did! I was noticeable among my companions by a large crucifix, which, like the missionaries, I carried in my belt. The crucifix had been given me by Léonie, and it was thought that in wearing it as I did, I was

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simply imitating my Carmelite sister. And certainly my heart was often in Carmel with my dear little Mother. I knew you were also in retreat, not to prepare for Jesus to give Himself to you, but to make ready to give yourself entirely to Him, and that on my First Communion Day. This time of quiet waiting was therefore doubly dear to me.

At last there dawned the most beautiful day of all the days of my life. How perfectly I remember even the smallest details of those sacred hours ! The joyful awakening, the reverent and tender embraces of my mistresses and older companions, the room filled with snow-white frocks, where each child was dressed in turn, and, above all, our entrance into the chapel and the melody of the morning hymn :

“O Altar of God, where the Angels are hovering.”

But I would not and I could not tell you all. Some things lose their fragrance when exposed to the air, and one's innermost thoughts cannot be translated into earthly words without instantly losing their deep and heavenly meaning. How sweet was the first embrace of Jesus ! It was indeed an embrace of love. I felt that I loved, and I said: “I love Thee, and I give myself to Thee for ever.” Jesus asked nothing of me, and claimed no sacrifice; for a long time He and little Thérèse had known and understood one

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another. That day our meeting was more than simple recognition, it was perfect union. We were no longer two. Thérèse had disappeared like a drop of water lost in the immensity of the ocean; Jesus alone remained—He was the Master, the King. Had not Thérèse asked Him to take away the liberty which frightened her? She felt herself so weak and frail, that she wished to be for ever united to the Divine Strength.

And then my joy became so intense, so deep, that it could not be restrained; tears of happiness welled up and overflowed. My companions were astonished, and asked each other afterwards; “Why did she cry? Had she anything on her conscience? . . . No, it is because she has not her Mother here, or the Carmelite sister of whom she is so fond.” And no one understood that all the joy of Heaven had come down into one heart, and that that heart—exiled, weak, and mortal—could not contain it without tears.

How could our darling Mother’s absence grieve me? Since Heaven itself dwelt in my soul, in receiving the visit of Jesus I received one from her as well. Nor were my tears due to your being away, for we were even more closely united than before. No, I repeat it—joy alone, a joy too deep for words, overflowed within me.

In the afternoon, I read the Act of Consecration to Our Lady in the name of all the First Communicants. Probably the choice fell upon me

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because my own earthly Mother had been taken from me while I was still so young. I put my whole heart into the reading of the prayer, and besought Our Blessed Lady always to watch over me. It seemed to me that she looked down lovingly, and once more smiled on her Little Flower.

I recalled the visible smile which had cured me, and my heart was full of all I now owed her, for it was no other than she who, on that very May morning, had placed in the garden of my soul her Son Jesus—“*the Flower of the field and the Lily of the valleys.*”¹

When evening came the little Queen walked hand in hand with Papa to Carmel, where I saw you, my beloved Pauline, now become the spouse of Christ and, like me, wearing a white veil and a crown of roses. My happiness was without alloy, for I hoped soon to join you and at your side to wait for Heaven.

I was not indifferent to the feast prepared at home, and I was charmed with the watch presented to me by Papa. But my joy was a tranquil joy. No exterior thing could interfere with the inward peace of my soul. At last, night fell, bringing to a close that beautiful day. For even the brightest days are followed by darkness; one alone can have no setting—the day of the

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eternal Communion in our only true Home. The morrow seemed veiled in melancholy. The pretty clothes, the presents I had received, did not satisfy me. Henceforth Our Lord alone could fill my heart, and I only longed for the blissful moment when I should receive Him again.

I made my second Communion on Ascension Day, and I had the pleasure of kneeling at the rails between Papa and Marie. My tears flowed with inexpressible sweetness, while I recalled and repeated again and again the words of St. Paul :—*"I live now not I, but Christ liveth in me."*¹ After the second visit of Our Lord, my one desire was for Holy Communion, and this was allowed to me on all the great feasts. Alas! how far apart they seemed!

On the eve of those happy days, Marie helped me to prepare, just as she had done for my First Communion. Once, I remember, she spoke of suffering and said that in all probability, instead of making me walk by that road, God, in His goodness, would carry me always like a little child. The following day, after Communion, these words came back to me, bringing with them an ardent desire for suffering, as well as a conviction that I should have many a cross to bear. Then a wave of consolation swept over my soul—of such consolation as in all my life I have never known. Suffering became my treasure. I

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

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found in it charms that held me spell-bound, though as yet I did not appreciate it to the full.

I had one other great wish : to love God only and to find my joy in Him alone. During my thanksgiving after Holy Communion, I often repeated this passage from the *Imitation of Christ*: "O my God, who art unspeakable sweetness, turn for me into bitterness all the consolations of earth."¹ These words rose to my lips naturally. I said them like a child who, without quite understanding, repeats what a friend may suggest. Later on, dear Mother, I will tell you how Our Lord has been pleased to fulfil my desire; how He, and He alone, has always been my joy. Were I to speak of it now, I should have to pass on to my girlhood, and there is still much to tell you of my earlier days.

Soon after my First Communion, I went into retreat again to prepare for Confirmation. It was with the greatest care that I made ready for the coming of the Holy Ghost, and I could not understand how anyone could do otherwise before receiving this Sacrament of Love.

For some reason the ceremony was delayed, so I had the consolation of having my retreat prolonged. How happy I felt! Like the Apostles, I looked with joy for the promised Comforter, gladdened by the thought that I should soon be a perfect Christian, and have

¹ Imit. III, ch. xxvi. 3.

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the holy Cross, the symbol of that wondrous Sacrament, traced upon my forehead for all eternity.

I did not feel the mighty wind of the first Pentecost, but rather the *gentle breeze* which the prophet Elias heard on Mount Horeb. On that day I received the gift of fortitude in suffering—a gift I needed sorely, for the martyrdom of my soul was soon to begin.

When these sweet and memorable feasts were over, I had to resume my life as a day pupil at the Abbey. I made good progress with my lessons, and remembered quite easily the sense of what I read; but I found the greatest difficulty in learning by heart, and indeed it was only at catechism my efforts were ever crowned with success. The chaplain called me his little “Doctor of Theology,”¹ no doubt because of my name Thérèse.

During recreation I frequently gave myself up to serious thoughts, while from a distance I watched my companions at play: in fact this was my favourite occupation. Another one, which gave me real pleasure, was to pick up the little dead birds that had fallen from the trees, and bury them in a special plot apart. At times, too, I told stories to my companions, and even the big girls came to listen, but my career as an

¹ St. Teresa is called the Doctor of Mystical Theology, because of her writings on the relations of the soul with God. [ED.]

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orator was soon, and wisely, brought to an end by the interference of our mistress who wished us to exercise our bodies and not our brains.

Just about this time, I chose as friends two little girls of my own age. But how shallow are the hearts of creatures! It happened that for some reason one of them had to remain at home for several months. While she was away I thought of her very often, and on her return showed great pleasure at seeing her again. All I met with, however, was a glance of indifference—my friendship was not appreciated. I felt this very keenly and I no longer sought an affection which had proved so inconstant. Nevertheless I still love my little school friend and I pray for her; God has given me a faithful heart and when once I love, I love for ever.

Observing that some of the girls were very devoted to one or other of the mistresses, I tried to imitate them, but never succeeded in winning special favour. Happy failure, from how many evils have you not saved me! I am most thankful to Our Lord that He has allowed me to find only bitterness in earthly friendships. With a heart such as mine I should so easily have been taken captive and had my wings clipped. How then should I have been able to "*fly away and be at rest*"? ¹ How can a heart given up to human affection be closely united to God?

¹ Ps. liv. 7.

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It appears to me impossible. I have seen so many souls who, having been allured like poor moths by this treacherous light, fly into the flame and burn their wings, then return injured to Our Lord, the Divine Fire which burns and does not consume.

I know well that Jesus saw I was too weak to be exposed to temptation, for without doubt had my eyes been dazzled by the deceitful light of creatures, I should have been utterly lost. There, where strong souls find joy and are faithful in practising detachment, I only found bitterness. No merit, then, is due to me for not having let myself be bound by these false ties, since I was preserved from them by God's sweet mercy alone. Too well do I realise that without Him I might have fallen as low as St. Mary Magdalen, and the great words of the Divine Master to Simon the Pharisee re-echo with much sweetness in my soul. I know that "*to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less,*"¹ but I know, too, that Our Lord has forgiven me even more than He forgave St. Mary Magdalen. I wish it were possible to say all that I feel, but here is an example which will convey to you some idea of what I mean.

Let us suppose that the son of a very clever doctor, stumbling over a stone on the road, falls and breaks his leg. His father hastens to his aid, and binds up the fractured limb with all the

¹ Luke vii. 47.

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skill at his command. When cured, the son shows the utmost gratitude—and with good reason.

Suppose on the other hand that the father, knowing that a large stone lies on his son's path, anticipates the danger, and, unseen by anyone, hastens to remove it. Unconscious of the accident from which such tender forethought has saved him, the son will not show any mark of gratitude for it, or feel the same love for his father as he would have done had he been cured of some grievous wound. But if he came to learn the whole truth, would he not love his father all the more?

Well now, I am this child, the object of the foreseeing love of a Father "*Who did not send His Son to call the just, but sinners.*"¹ He wishes me to love Him because He has forgiven me, not much, but everything. Without waiting for me to love Him much, as St. Mary Magdalen did, He has made me understand how He has loved me with an ineffable love and forethought, in order that my own love may reach *even unto folly*. I have often heard it said, both in retreats and elsewhere, that an innocent soul has never loved more than a repentant one. Ah, if I could but give the lie to those words!

But I have wandered so far from my subject that I scarcely know where to begin again . . . It was during the retreat before my second

¹ Luke v. 32.

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Communion that I fell a prey to scruples, and I remained in this unhappy state for nearly two years. It is not possible for me to describe all the sufferings it entailed; one must have passed through such a martyrdom to be able to understand it. Every thought, every action, even the simplest, was a source of trouble and anguish; no peace came to me till I told everything to Marie, and that cost me a great deal, for I imagined myself obliged to lay open absolutely all my thoughts, even the most extravagant. This done, I experienced a momentary peace, but it passed like a flash and once again the martyrdom began. Dear Marie, with how many occasions for patience did I not furnish you?

That year we spent a fortnight of our holidays at the sea-side. My aunt, ever ready to give proof of her motherly love, treated us to all manner of amusements—donkey rides, shrimping, and so on. She indulged us also in the matter of clothes: once, I remember, she gave me some pale blue ribbon and, in spite of my twelve and a half years, I was such a child that I quite enjoyed tying it on my hair. But even this childish pleasure filled me with scruples, and I could not rest till I had been to confession.

During our stay at Trouville, I had a salutary lesson. Cousin Marie frequently had sick headaches and on these occasions my aunt used to fondle her and call her the most endearing names.

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The only response, however, was continual tears and the ceaseless complaint: "My head aches!" Though I had a headache nearly every day, I made no complaint. But one evening I was seized with a desire to imitate Marie, and throwing myself into an arm-chair in a corner of the room, I began to cry. Cousin Jeanne, to whom I was very devoted, was soon at my side, and my aunt too was all anxiety to know what was the matter. Like Marie, I only answered: "My head aches!" Apparently, complaining was a part which did not suit me, for I failed to convince anyone that a headache was the real cause of my tears. Therefore, instead of pitying me as she usually did, aunt spoke to me very seriously. Jeanne went so far as to reproach me, kindly, it is true, but evidently grieved at my lack of simplicity, and want of confidence in my aunt, for she was convinced that my tears were caused by some scruple which I was unwilling to make known. Getting nothing for my pains, I made up my mind never again to imitate other people, and I now understood the fable of the ass and the little dog. I was the ass who, seeing all the petting bestowed on the dog, put his clumsy hoof on the table to try and secure his share. If, unlike the poor animal, I escaped a sound beating, I received at any rate what I deserved—a severe lesson which cured me once and for all of the desire to attract attention.

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I must now return to the subject of my scruples. They made me so ill that I had to be taken from school when I was thirteen. To complete my education, Papa took me several times a week to have lessons from a very competent teacher, which lessons served the purpose not only of instructing me, but also of bringing me into contact with the outside world.

Visitors were often shown into the quaintly furnished room where I sat surrounded with my books, and though conversation was carried on, as far as possible, by my governess's mother, I did not succeed in learning much while the visit lasted. Though seemingly absorbed in my work, little escaped my attention, even of what it would have been far better I should not hear. One visitor remarked on my beautiful hair; another enquired, as she left the room, who was the pretty little girl? Such remarks, all the more flattering because I was not meant to hear them, left a certain feeling of pleasure which clearly proved that I was full of self-love.

How great is my compassion for souls that perish! It is so easy to go astray along the world's seductive paths. Without doubt the sweetness which it offers to one somewhat advanced in virtue is always mingled with bitterness, nor can the immense void of such a soul's desires be filled by the flattery of a moment; but in my case, had not my heart been lifted up to God

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from its first awakening, had the world smiled on me from the cradle, there is no knowing what I might have become. How gratefully then, dearest Mother, do I sing "*the Mercies of the Lord!*" Has He not, according to the words of Holy Wisdom, "*taken me away from the world lest wickedness should alter my understanding, or deceit beguile my soul?*"¹

Meanwhile, I resolved to consecrate myself in a special way to Our Blessed Lady, and therefore I sought admission into the Sodality of the Children of Mary.² For this it was necessary to go twice a week to the convent, and I was so shy that I must admit it cost me an effort. I certainly had a great love for my mistresses, and I shall always retain a strong feeling of gratitude towards them, but, as I have already said, I had no special friend among them with whom, like other old pupils, I might have spent several hours. So I worked on in silence till the end of the sewing lesson, and then, as no one took any notice of me, I went to the tribune in the chapel and waited there until Papa came to take me home.

Here, in this quiet visit, I found my one consolation. But was not Jesus my only friend? To Him alone could I open my heart. All conversation with creatures, even on holy subjects, wearied me. True, I sometimes felt sad because of the

¹ Cf. Wisdom iv. 11.

² She became a Sodalist of Our Lady, May 31, 1886. [Ed.]

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indifference shown me, but I would console myself by repeating this line from a beautiful poem Papa used often to recite for us:

“Time is thy barque and not thy home.”

Young as I was, these words restored my courage, and even now, though I have outgrown many of the pious impressions of childhood, the symbol of a ship always delights me, and helps me to bear with my exile. Does not the Wise Man tell us: *“Life is like a ship that passeth through the waves; when it is gone, the trace thereof cannot be found”*?¹

When my thoughts turn this way they soon lose themselves in the infinite. I seem already to touch the heavenly shore, and to feel Our Lord’s loving embrace. In my fancy, I can see Our Blessed Lady coming towards me, Papa and Mamma by her side, and in their company those four little angels, our baby brothers and sisters. Then at last I taste, as in a dream, the true and unending joys of Home.

But before reaching our Heavenly Father’s Home, I had many separations to endure upon earth. The same year in which I was made a Child of Mary, Our Lady took from me my dearest Marie,² the only support of my soul. Since the time of your entering Carmel

¹ Wisdom v. 10.

² Marie entered the Carmel of Lisieux on October 15, 1886, taking the name of Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart. [CARMEL.]

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she had been my spiritual guide, and I loved her so deeply that I could not bear to be deprived of her gentle companionship.

I no sooner heard of her determination than I resolved to take no further interest in anything here below and I shed abundant tears. But tears at that time were nothing unusual ; they flowed for the most trivial cause. I was most anxious, for instance, to advance in virtue, yet I went about it in a strange way. I had never been accustomed to wait on myself, or do any house work, and Céline always arranged our room. Now, however, with the intention of pleasing Our Lord, I would sometimes make my bed, or, if Céline happened to be out, I would bring in her plants and cuttings. Since it was for Our Lord's sake that I did these little things I ought not to have looked for any return. But, alas ! I did look for thanks, and if, unfortunately, Céline did not seem surprised and grateful for my small services, I was disappointed, as my tears soon showed.

Again, if I unintentionally offended anyone, far from making the best of it, I fretted until I became quite ill, thus increasing my fault instead of repairing it. Then when I began to be reconciled to the blunder, I would cry for having cried. In fact, I made troubles out of everything. But all this has come to an end. The favours God has showered upon me have wrought a complete

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change and I am no longer the same. Thanks to grace from above, transitory things cannot depress me, and as my thoughts revert to what I used to be, my heart overflows with gratitude.

Marie having entered Carmel, I could not tell her of my scruples, so I turned towards Heaven and confided them to the four little angels who had gone before me. I thought that these innocent souls, who had never known either sorrow or fear, ought to have pity on their poor little suffering sister. I talked to them with childish simplicity, and told them that as I was the youngest of the family, I had always been the most petted and loved by my parents and sisters, and that if they too had remained on earth, they would no doubt have given me the same proofs of affection. I told them also that the fact of their being in Heaven was no reason why they should forget me. On the contrary, since they could draw from the treasury of Heaven, they ought to obtain for me the grace of peace, and so prove that in Paradise they loved me still.

I had not long to wait for the answer: a sweet peace soon inundated my soul and I knew that I was loved, not only on earth but also in Heaven. From that day my devotion towards those blessed ones increased; I loved to talk to them, to tell them of all the sorrows of this exile, and of my great longing to join them soon in our Eternal Home.

CHAPTER V

VOCATION OF THÉRÈSE

I WAS far from meriting the graces showered upon me by Our Lord. I had a constant and ardent desire to advance in virtue, but how numerous were the imperfections that were mingled with my acts! My extreme sensitiveness made me almost unbearable, and all arguments against it were simply useless, I could not correct myself of this miserable failing.

How then could I dare hope to be soon admitted into Carmel, since nothing short of a miracle was needed if my childish ways were to be altered? But God wrought the desired miracle on December 25, 1886. On that blessed Christmas night, the sweet Infant Jesus, scarce yet an hour old, flooded with His glorious sunshine the darkness into which my soul was plunged. In becoming weak and little for love of me, He made me strong and brave, He placed His own weapons in my hands, and I went from victory to victory, beginning, so to speak, "*to run as a giant.*"¹ The fountain of my tears was dried up, and from that time they flowed neither easily nor often.

¹ Cf. Psalm xviii. 5.

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I must tell you here, dear Mother, the circumstances under which I received the priceless grace of my complete conversion. On reaching home, after midnight Mass, I knew I should find my shoes in the chimney-corner, filled with presents, just as when I was a little child, a fact which proves that I was still treated as a baby. Papa loved to watch my enjoyment and hear my cries of delight as I drew each fresh surprise from the magic shoes, and his pleasure added considerably to mine.

But the hour had come when Our Lord desired to free me from the failings of my childhood, and take from me even its innocent pleasures. He permitted that Papa, instead of indulging me in his usual way, should feel annoyed, and as I went upstairs I overheard him say : "All this is far too babyish for a big girl like Thérèse, and I hope this is the last time it will happen." These words cut me to the very heart, and Céline, knowing how sensitive I was, whispered : "Don't go down just yet, you would only cry if you looked at your presents before Papa." But Thérèse was no longer the same—Jesus had transformed her. Choking back my tears, I ran down to the dining room, and making every effort to still the throbbing of my heart, I picked up my shoes and gaily drew out the presents one by one, looking all the time as happy as a queen. Papa joined in the laughter and

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there no longer appeared on his face the least sign of vexation. Céline thought she must be dreaming, but happily it was a sweet reality, and Thérèse had once for all regained the strength of mind which had left her when she was four and a half.

On this radiant night began the third period of my life, the most beautiful of all, the most filled with heavenly favours. Satisfied with my good-will, Our Lord accomplished in an instant the work I had not been able to do during years. Like the Apostles, I might have said : "*Master we have laboured all night and have taken nothing !*"¹ More merciful to me than to His beloved disciples, Jesus Himself took the net, and casting it, drew it out full of fishes : He made me *a fisher of men*. Love, and a spirit of self-forgetfulness took complete possession of my heart, and thenceforward I was perfectly happy.

One Sunday, on closing my book at the end of Mass, a picture of the crucifixion slipped partly out, showing one of the Divine Hands, pierced and bleeding. An indescribable thrill, such as I had never before experienced, passed through me ; my heart was torn with grief at the sight of the Precious Blood falling to the ground, with no one caring to treasure it as it fell. At once I resolved to remain continuously in spirit at the foot of the Cross, that I might receive

¹ Luke v. 5.

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the divine dew of salvation and pour it forth upon souls.

From that day, the cry of my dying Saviour: "*I thirst!*" resounded incessantly in my heart, kindling within it new fires of zeal. To give my Beloved to drink was my constant desire; I was consumed with an insatiable thirst for souls, and I longed at any cost to snatch them from the everlasting flames of hell.

In order to enkindle my ardour still further, Our Divine Master showed me how pleasing to Him was my zeal. About this time, I heard people speak of a notorious criminal, Pranzini, who had been condemned to death for several horrible murders. He was impenitent and in consequence it was feared he would be eternally lost. I longed to avert that greatest of misfortunes, a calamity beyond all repair, and I employed all the spiritual means I could think of to obtain the ransom of this poor sinner. Knowing that of myself I could do nothing, I offered up the infinite merits of Our Saviour together with the treasures of Holy Church.

In the depths of my heart I felt convinced my request would be granted, but, that I might gain courage to persevere in the quest for souls, I said in all simplicity: "My God, I am sure Thou wilt pardon this unhappy Pranzini, and I should still think so even if he does not confess his sins or give any sign of sorrow—such is the

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confidence I have in Thy unbounded mercy. But, because this is my first sinner, I beg for just one *sign* of repentance to reassure me."

My prayer was granted to the letter. Though Papa never allowed us to read newspapers, I did not consider it an act of disobedience when on the day following the execution I hastily opened the paper, *La Croix*, and looked for the part concerning Pranzini. What was it I saw? . . . Tears betrayed my emotion and I was obliged to run from the room. Without confession or absolution Pranzini had mounted the scaffold, and the executioners were dragging him towards the fatal block, when all at once, apparently in answer to a sudden inspiration, he turned round, seized a crucifix which the priest held towards him, *and kissed Our Lord's Sacred Wounds three times!* . . .

I had obtained the desired sign, and it came with special sweetness, for was it not the sight of the Precious Blood, flowing from the Wounds of Jesus, which had fired me with that great thirst for souls? I had longed to give them to drink of the Blood of the Immaculate Lamb, that it might wash away their stains, and lo! the lips of "my first-born" had been pressed to those Divine Wounds. How touching was the answer from Heaven!

After this answer to prayer my desire for the salvation of souls increased day by day. I seemed to hear Our Lord whispering to me as He did

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to the Samaritan woman: "*Give me to drink.*"¹ It was truly an exchange of love: I poured out the Precious Blood of Jesus upon souls, and to Jesus—in order to quench His thirst—I offered these same souls refreshed with the dew of Calvary. But the more I gave Him to drink, the greater became the thirst of my own poor soul, and this was indeed my most precious reward.

In a short while, God in His goodness had lifted me out of the narrow sphere in which I lived. The great step was taken, but a long road lay before me. Freed, however, from scruples and over-sensitiveness, my mind expanded, and as I was always a lover of the noble and beautiful, I developed about this time a passionate desire for learning. Not satisfied with the lessons of my mistress, I took up certain subjects by myself and in a few months learned more than I had done in my whole school-life. But was not this zeal—"vanity and vexation of spirit"?² I was now at the most dangerous time of my life, and with my impetuous nature, I should have run grave risk were it not that God wrought on my behalf what Ezechiel describes in his prophecy:

"Behold thy time was the time of lovers: and I spread My garment over thee. And I swore to thee, and I entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest Mine. And I washed thee with water and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee with fine garments,

¹ John iv. 7.

² Eccl. i. 14.

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and put a chain about thy neck. Thou didst eat fine flour and honey and oil, and wast made exceedingly beautiful, and wast advanced to be a queen.”¹

All this Our Lord has done for me. I might take each word of that striking passage, apply it to myself, and show how completely it has been realised in me, but in the graces I have already recorded you have a sufficient proof, so I shall only speak now of the abundant food provided for me by my Divine Master. For a long time I had sustained my spiritual life on the “*fine flour*” contained in the *Imitation of Christ*. It was the only book from which I derived any good, because as yet I had not discovered the treasures hidden in the Holy Gospels. I always carried it about with me, much to the amusement of those at home, and my aunt would often open it and make me repeat the first chapter she chanced to light upon.

When I was fourteen, my thirst for knowledge grew so keen that God thought fit to add to the fine flour abundant honey and oil, and this honey and oil I found in the conferences of Father Arminjon on *The End of this World and the Mysteries of the World to Come*. While reading them, my soul was steeped in a joy that was not of earth; I experienced a foretaste of what Our Father has prepared for those who love Him, and understanding how far eternal rewards

¹ Ezechiel xvi. 8, 9, 13.

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exceed the petty sacrifices of this life, I yearned to love God passionately, and, while it still lay in my power, to prove that love in countless ways.

Since Christmas especially, Céline had become the most intimate sharer of my thoughts. Our Lord, wishing us to advance in virtue together, drew us to one another by ties stronger than blood. He made us sisters in spirit as well as in the flesh, and in us were realised the words of our holy Father, St. John of the Cross:

Treading in Thy footsteps
Young maidens lightly run upon the way.
From the spark's contact,
And the spiced wine,
They give forth aspirations of a balm divine.

Truly it was with light hearts that we followed in the footsteps of Jesus. The burning sparks which He cast into our souls, the strong wine which He gave us to drink, made us blind to all earthly things, and from our lips broke forth aspirations all fragrant with love.

What tender memories are awakened as I think of the intercourse of those days! Every evening, from our spacious attic window, we gazed at the azure vault studded with golden stars, and it seems to me that in those moments many precious graces were bestowed upon His children. "God," says the author of the *Imitation*, "communicates Himself sometimes amid great light, at other

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times sweetly veiled under signs and figures.”¹ In this latter way He deigned to manifest Himself to our hearts; but how light and transparent was the veil! Doubt was no longer possible: Faith and Hope had already given place to Love—Love which made us find Him whom we sought, even upon earth. And when He found us alone—“*He gave us His kiss and now no one may despise us.*”²

These divine impressions could not but bear fruit, and the practice of virtue gradually became sweet and natural to me. In the beginning my looks betrayed the effort, but little by little self-sacrifice grew easy, even from the very first call. Our Lord has said: “*To everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall abound.*”³ Each grace faithfully received brought in its train many others. He gave Himself to me in Holy Communion more frequently than I dared hope, for I had made it a rule to receive Him as often as my confessor would allow, but never to solicit any further leave. Now, however, I should act very differently: I am quite certain that a soul ought to make known to her spiritual guide the longing she has to receive her God. It is not to remain in a golden ciborium that He comes down from Heaven each day, but to seek another Heaven—the Heaven of our souls wherein He takes such delight.

¹ Cf. Imit. III. Ch. xlii. 4. ² Cf. Cant. vii. 1. ³ Luke xix. 26.

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To satisfy my desires, Our Lord inspired my confessor to permit me to receive Holy Communion several times weekly, and this permission coming, as it did, straight from Him, filled me with joy. In those days I did not dare to speak of my intimate feelings; the road I trod was so direct, so clear, that I did not feel the need of any other guide but Jesus. I compared directors to mirrors that faithfully reflect Our Saviour to the souls under their care, and I thought that in my case He used no intermediary, but acted directly.

When a gardener gives special attention to a fruit which he wishes to ripen early, it is never with a view to leaving it on the tree, but rather to placing it on a well-spread table. In the same way did Our Lord lavish His favours on His Little Flower, for He willed that His mercies should shine forth in her—He who while on earth cried out in a transport of joy: “*I bless Thee, O Father, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones.*”¹ And because I was small and frail, He deigned to stoop down to me and instruct me gently in the secrets of His love.

As St. John of the Cross sings in his *Cantic of the Soul*:

On that happy night
In secret I went forth, beheld by none,
And seeing naught ;

¹ Cf. Luke x. 21.

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Having no light nor guide
Excepting that which burned within my heart,
Which lit my way
More safely than the glare of noon-day sun
To where, expectant,
He waited for me Who doth know me well,
Where none appeared but He.

This place was Carmel, but before I could "*sit down under His shadowe whom I desired,*"¹ I had to pass through many a trial. And yet the divine call was becoming so insistent that had it been necessary for me to go through fire to follow Our Lord, I should have cast myself into the flames.

You, and you alone, encouraged me in my vocation; in your loving heart mine found a faithful echo, and without you I should never have reached the blessed haven which, already for five years, had sheltered my little Mother. For five years we had been kept apart; you had seemed as though lost to me, but now, in the hour of trial, it was your hand that showed me the path I should follow, and assuredly I was in sore need of this consolation. My visits to the convent were becoming more and more distressing, for I could not speak of my desire to enter without encountering opposition. Marie, considering me too young did all that was

¹ Cant. ii. 3.

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possible to thwart my plans; in fact, from the very beginning, there were obstacles at every turn. Besides, I feared to tell Céline, and that tortured me. It was so hard to have a secret she did not share. However, she soon found out my intention, and far from striving to hold me back accepted the sacrifice with wonderful courage. She, too, wished to be a nun, and was entitled to go first, but imitating the martyrs of old who used to embrace joyfully those chosen to go before them into the arena, she willingly allowed me to leave her, and took my troubles as much to heart as though it had been a question of her own vocation.

From Céline then I had nothing to fear, but I did not know how to speak to Papa. How could I ask him to part with his little Queen, when he had already made the sacrifice of his two eldest daughters? Moreover, that year he had been stricken with a serious attack of paralysis, and though he had recovered quickly we were full of anxiety for the future.

What struggles I went through before I could decide! But I had to act promptly, for I was now fourteen and a half. In six months' time the blessed feast of Christmas would be here, and I had resolved to enter Carmel at the same hour at which, a year before, I had received the grace to overcome my childish failings, the hour of my complete conversion.

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I chose the feast of Pentecost on which to make my great disclosure. All day I prayed for light from the Holy Ghost. I called upon the Apostles to plead for me, and begged them to inspire me with the words I ought to use. Were they not the very Saints to help a timid child whom God destined to become an apostle of apostles by prayer and sacrifice?

In the afternoon, on our return from Vespers, I found the opportunity I so much desired. Papa had gone into the garden, and was sitting there, with hands clasped, admiring the wonders of nature. The birds were warbling their evening prayer, and the crimson rays of the setting sun still lingered on the tall trees, kissing their upper branches to gold.

His face wore a heavenly expression—I could feel that his soul was full of peace. Without saying a word, I sat down by his side, my eyes already wet with tears. He looked at me with indescribable tenderness, and, pressing me to his heart, said: “What is it, little Queen? Tell me . . .” Then as if to hide his own emotion, he rose and walked slowly up and down, still holding me close to him.

Through my tears I spoke of Carmel and of my great wish to enter soon. He too, wept, but did not say one word to turn me from my vocation; he simply pointed out to me that I

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was still very young to decide on so grave a matter. I insisted, pleading urgently my cause, and because of his upright, generous nature, our noble Father soon yielded. For a long time we continued our walk in the garden; my heart was relieved and Papa no longer shed tears. He spoke to me just as a Saint might have spoken and showed me some little white flowers, like miniature lilies, which were growing on a low stone wall. Picking one, he gave it to me, and remarked with what loving care God had brought it to bloom and preserved it until that day.

I thought I was listening to my own life story, so close was the resemblance between the little flower and little Thérèse. I received it as a relic, and I noticed that in trying to pluck the slender blossom, Papa had pulled it up by the roots : it seemed destined to live on, but in other and more fertile soil. He had just done the same thing for me, by permitting me to leave the sweet valley of my childhood's years for the mountain of Carmel. I fastened my little white flower to a picture of Our Lady of Victories, so that the Blessed Virgin smiles upon it and the Infant Jesus seems to hold it in His hand. It is there still, but the stalk is now broken close to the root. No doubt God wishes me to understand by this that He will soon sever all the earthly ties of His Little Flower, and will not leave her to fade here below.

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Having secured Papa's consent, I thought I could fly to Carmel without further hindrance. To my dismay, when I confided the secret to my uncle, he declared that to enter such a severe order at the age of fifteen seemed contrary to all human prudence, and, moreover, that it would be doing a wrong to religion to let a mere child embrace such a life. He added that he would oppose it in every possible way, and that nothing short of a miracle would induce him to change his mind. I clearly saw that all arguments were useless and I left him, my heart overwhelmed with grief. My only consolation lay in prayer. I entreated Our Lord to work the miracle of which my uncle had spoken, for thus only could I respond to His divine call. Some time elapsed, and to all appearances my uncle had forgotten our interview, though later I learned it had been constantly in his thoughts.

Before sending a ray of hope to shine on my soul, God allowed me to pass through a three days' martyrdom of another and most grievous kind. Never before had I so well understood the bitter sorrow of Our Lady and St. Joseph as they walked through the streets of Jerusalem in search of the Divine Child. It was as if I were lost in some fearful desert; or rather my soul seemed like a frail skiff, without a pilot, left to the mercy of the stormy waters. I knew that Jesus was there, asleep in my barque, but how

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could I see Him through a night of such darkness? Had the storm really broken, a flash of lightning might have pierced the clouds that hung over me, enabling me to catch a momentary glimpse of the Beloved of my heart, but even that sorry light was denied me. All around was night, dark night, utter desolation, death! Like my Divine Master in Gethsemane, I felt that I was alone, and that I could find no comfort, neither on earth nor in Heaven.

Nature seemed to share my deep sadness, for during those three days there was not one ray of sunshine and the rain fell in torrents. Again and again I have noticed that, all through my life, Nature has reflected my feelings. When I wept, the heavens wept with me; when I rejoiced, no cloud darkened the azure sky. On the fourth day, a Saturday, I went to see my uncle, and what was my surprise to find his attitude towards me completely changed! First of all he brought me into his private study—a privilege quite unasked; then, after gently reproaching me for being somewhat reserved towards him, he told me the miracle he had exacted was no longer necessary. He had prayed to God to guide his heart aright, and the prayer had been heard. Indeed I scarcely knew my uncle, so sympathetic had he become. After embracing me like a father, he said with deep feeling: "Go in peace, dear child, you are a

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privileged little flower which Our Lord wishes to gather for Himself; I will no longer put any obstacle in your way."

How joyfully I retraced my steps homeward under a beautiful sky whence every cloud had vanished! In my soul, too, dark night was gone; I no longer heard the roar of the waves—Jesus had awakened to gladden my heart. Instead of an adverse wind a light breeze swelled my sails and I thought myself safe in port. But alas! more than one such storm was yet to arise, making me fear lest I should be driven, without hope of return, from the shore I so longed to reach.

Scarcely had I obtained my uncle's approval when you yourself told me the Superior of the Carmel¹ would not allow me to enter till I was twenty-one. No one had dreamt of this opposition, the hardest of all to overcome, yet without losing courage I went with Papa to lay my request before him. He received me very coldly. Nothing would induce him to change his mind, and we left him with a very emphatic "No." "Of course," he added, "I am only the Bishop's delegate; should he allow you to enter, I shall have nothing to say."

When we came out of the presbytery it was once more raining in torrents, and my soul, too, was overcast with heavy clouds. Papa was at a

¹ Father Delatröette.

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loss to know how to console me. He promised that, if I wished it, I should go with him to Bayeux,¹ and I gladly accepted. Many things, however, happened before we were able to undertake the journey. Meanwhile, to all outward appearances, my life continued as before. I went on studying—more important still, I went on growing in the love of God, and now and then I experienced what were indeed raptures of spiritual joy.

One evening, not knowing in what words to tell Jesus how much I loved Him, and how much I wished that He might be everywhere honoured and served, the sad thought forced itself upon my mind that from the depths of hell there would never go up to Him one single act of love. From my inmost heart I then cried out that I would gladly be cast into that place of torment and blasphemy to make Him eternally loved even there. This could not be for His glory, since He only desires our happiness, but love must needs speak foolishly. And though I spoke thus, I coveted Heaven most eagerly; nevertheless Heaven for me meant nothing but *love*, and in my ardour I felt I could not be separated from the Divine Being who held me captive.

It was about this time that Our Lord gave

¹ To interview Mgr. Hugonin, the Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux who lived at Bayeux. [Ed.]

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me the consolation of gaining a more intimate knowledge of the souls of children. It happened in the following way. During the illness of a poor woman, I interested myself in her two little girls, the elder of whom was scarcely six. It was a real pleasure to see with what simplicity they believed all I told them. Baptism must indeed plant deeply in our hearts the theological virtues, since the hope of heavenly joys is strong enough to make us practise self-denial even from our earliest childhood. When I wanted the two little girls to be kind to one another, instead of promising toys and sweets, I talked to them about the eternal reward the Holy Child Jesus would give to good children. The elder one, who was coming to the use of reason, would look quite pleased and ask me charming questions about the little Jesus and His beautiful Heaven. She promised me faithfully always to yield to her younger sister, adding that all through her life she would never forget what I had taught her. I used to compare those innocent souls to soft wax, ready to receive any impression—evil, alas! as well as good, and I understood the words of Our Lord: *“It were better to be thrown into the sea than to scandalise one of these little ones.”*¹

How many souls might attain great sanctity if only they were directed aright from the first!

¹ Cf. Matt. xviii. 6.

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I know that God has no need of anyone to help Him in His work of sanctification, but just as He allows a clever gardener to cultivate rare and delicate plants, providing him with the necessary skill to accomplish it, while reserving to Himself the task of making them grow, so also does He wish to be helped in the divine cultivation of souls. What would happen if an ignorant gardener did not properly graft his trees? What if, without understanding the nature of each, he endeavoured, for instance, to grow roses on peach trees?

This reminds me that among my birds I used to have a canary which sang beautifully, and also a tiny linnet of which I was specially fond, having adopted it straight from the nest. The little prisoner, deprived of the teaching it should have received from its parents, and hearing from morning till night the joyous trills of the canary, tried one day to imitate them. No easy task indeed for a linnet! It was delightful to follow the efforts of the poor little thing, for its sweet voice found great difficulty in accommodating itself to the vibrant notes of its master; but to my great surprise the linnet's song became in time exactly like the song of the canary.

Dear Mother, you know who taught me to sing from the days of my earliest childhood. You know the voices which drew me on. And

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in spite of my weakness, I trust it may be granted to me to sing through eternity the Canticle of Love of which the harmonious notes have here below so often fallen on my ear.

But where am I? These thoughts have carried me far from my subject. I must resume the history of my vocation.

Together with Papa I set out for Bayeux on October 31, 1887. My heart was full of hope, mingled with excitement at the thought of calling at His Lordship's house. For the first time in my life I was going to pay a visit without any of my sisters, and this to a Bishop. I, who had never yet had to speak except to answer questions addressed to me, would have to explain and enlarge on my reasons for wishing to enter Carmel, and so give proof of the genuineness of my vocation. It cost me a great effort to overcome my shyness sufficiently for this, yet it is true that Love knows no such word as "impossible," but believes "it may and can do all things."¹ I had to purchase my happiness by heavy trials, and nothing but the love of Jesus could have made me face these hardships, as well as the many others which followed. To-day, it is true, I look upon them as insignificant, and were not the happiness already mine, to win it I would willingly pay the price a thousand times over.

¹ Cf. *Imit.* III. v. 4.

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When we reached the Bishop's house, the flood-gates of Heaven seemed to have opened afresh. The Vicar-General, Father Révérony, who had arranged the date of our visit, received us very kindly, though he looked a little surprised. Noticing tears in my eyes, he said: "Ah! those diamonds! they must not be shown to His Lordship!"

We passed through reception rooms so large that I felt like some tiny ant, and I wondered all the while what I should dare to say. The Bishop was walking in a corridor with two priests. I saw the Vicar-General exchange some words with him and together they came into the room where we were waiting. A bright fire was burning on the hearth, in front of which were three enormous armchairs.

As His Lordship entered, Papa and I knelt for his blessing, after which he signed for us to sit down. Father Révérony directed me to the armchair in the middle; I excused myself politely but he insisted, telling me to show if I knew how to obey, so I took it without further remark. I was mortified, however, to see him take an ordinary chair while I was buried in an enormous seat that would have held quite comfortably four children like myself—more comfortably, in fact, for I was far from being at ease. I had hoped that Papa would speak, but instead of this, he bade me explain the object

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of our visit. I did so as eloquently as I knew how, conscious all the time that one word from the Superior would have carried more weight than all I could say, while his opposition told strongly against me.

The Bishop asked me if it were long since I had wished to enter Carmel. "A very long time, my Lord," I replied. "Come!" said the Vicar-General, laughing, "it certainly cannot be fifteen years." "That is true," I answered, "but there are not very many years to subtract, for I have wished to give myself to God from the time I was three."

The Bishop, no doubt to please Papa, tried to make me understand that I ought to remain at home some time longer. To his surprise and edification Papa took my part, adding, in the most courteous way, that we were going to Rome with the diocesan pilgrimage, and that if I failed to obtain the desired permission before then, I should not hesitate to speak to the Holy Father.

It was decided, however, that before giving an answer it would be necessary to interview the Superior of the Carmel. This, of course, was particularly unpleasant news, for I knew only too well his declared and determined opposition, and in spite of the Vicar-General's advice not to allow any "diamonds" to be seen, I not only showed my tears but let them fall. The Bishop seemed

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touched, and treated me with the most paternal kindness, greater kindness, I was afterwards told, than he had ever displayed to any child. "All is not lost, little one," he said, "but I am very glad you are going to Rome with your good Father; it will strengthen your vocation, and, instead of weeping, you ought to rejoice. Next week I shall be at Lisieux and I will talk to the Superior about you. You shall certainly have my answer while you are in Italy."

His Lordship next took us to the garden, and he was much interested when Papa told him that, to make myself look older, I had put up my hair for the first time that very morning. Nor was the incident forgotten, for even now, when the Bishop speaks to anyone about his "little daughter," he always repeats the story of her hair. I own that I would rather it had been left untold. As the Vicar-General accompanied us to the door, he remarked that such a thing had never yet been seen—a father as anxious to give his child to God as the child was to offer herself.

We had then to return to Lisieux without any favourable answer. It seemed to me as though my future were for ever shattered, for the nearer I drew to the goal, the greater my difficulties became. Yet all the time, deep down in my heart reigned a wondrous peace, because I knew I was seeking only God's Will.

CHAPTER VI

A PILGRIMAGE TO ROME

THREE days after the journey to Bayeux, I set out on another and a much longer one, our pilgrimage to the Eternal City. It taught me the hollowness of all things that pass away. I saw, however, splendid monuments; I studied the countless wonders of art and religion; and better than all, I stood on the very soil trodden by the Apostles and bedewed with the blood of Martyrs, and my soul grew strong by contact with those holy things.

I am delighted to have visited Rome, but I can quite understand people believing that Papa undertook this pilgrimage with a view to altering my ideas on the religious life. It might well have injured a vocation less firmly established.

To begin with, Céline and I found ourselves in the company of people of rank; indeed there were few others amongst the pilgrims. Far from being dazzled, nevertheless, by any such splendour, we looked on all those exalted titles but as a "*vapour of smoke*."¹ I understood the words of the *Imitation*: "Be not solicitous for the shadow of a great name,"² and I realised

¹ Joel ii. 19.

² Imit. III. xxiv. 2.

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that true greatness is not found in a name but in the soul. The Prophet Isaias tells us: "*The Lord shall call His servants by another name,*"¹ and we read in St. John: "*To him that overcometh I will give a white counter, and on the counter a new name written which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it.*"² In the next world, therefore, we shall know our titles of nobility, and "*then shall every man have praise from God,*"³ and he who upon earth chose for love of his Saviour to be the poorest and least known, will be the first, the noblest, and the richest in Heaven.

The second piece of knowledge I acquired concerned God's Priests. Up to this time I could not understand the chief aim of the Carmelite Reform. The thought of praying for sinners afforded me the utmost delight, but I was surprised at the idea of praying for priests, whose souls I deemed purer than crystal. In Italy, I understood my vocation, and the long journey was well worth undertaking to gain such useful knowledge.

During that month I met many holy priests. Yet I saw that despite the sublime dignity of the Priesthood which raises them above the Angels, they still remain men and subject to human frailty. Now if those whom Our Lord in the Gospel calls "*the salt of the earth*"—if holy priests have need of our prayers, what must be

1 Isa. lxx. 15.

2 Apoc. ii. 17.

3 I. Cor. iv. 5.

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the needs of the lukewarm? Has not Our Lord said also: "*If the salt lose its savour wherewith shall it be salted?*"¹

Dear Mother, how beautiful is our vocation! We Carmelites are called upon to preserve "*the salt of the earth*", to offer our prayers and sacrifices for the apostles of the Lord, to be their apostles, while they by word and example are preaching the Gospel to our brethren. Have we not a noble mission to fulfil? But I must say no more on this subject, or my pen would run on for ever. It is time to return to the journey. Let me describe it for you more in detail.

On the morning of November 4, while Lisieux lay shrouded in the darkness of night we passed through her silent streets. I felt that I was going out into the unknown, that great things were awaiting me in the Eternal City. When we reached Paris, Papa took us to see all its wonders, but for me the sole attraction was the church of Our Lady of Victories. I can never tell you what I felt at her shrine; the graces she granted me there were like those of my First Communion Day, and I was filled with happiness and peace. In this holy spot the Blessed Virgin, my Mother, told me plainly it was really she who had smiled on me and cured me. With intense fervour, I entreated her to guard me always, to realise my heart's desire by

¹ Matt. v. 13.

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sheltering me under her spotless mantle, and to remove from me every occasion of sin.

I was well aware that throughout the pilgrimage I should come across things that might disturb me, and having no knowledge of evil, I feared to discover it. As yet I had not experienced that "*to the pure all things are pure*"¹—that a simple and upright soul does not see evil in anything, since evil exists only in impure hearts and not in inanimate objects. From my childhood, devotion to St. Joseph had been interwoven with my love for Our Blessed Lady, so I prayed to him also that he might watch over me. Each day I said the prayer beginning: "St. Joseph, Father and Protector of Virgins." Under such patronage, I felt quite sheltered from harm.

On November 7, after our solemn consecration to the Sacred Heart in the Basilica of Montmartre,² we quitted Paris. Each compartment of the train was named after a Saint, the selection being made in honour of some priest who was among the occupants—his own patron or that of his parish being chosen. But

¹ Tit i. 15.

² Montmartre—the "Mount of Martyrs"—is the hill on which St. Denis, Apostle and Bishop of Paris, was martyred with his two companions, in the third century. It was a famous place of pilgrimage in mediæval times, and it was here that St. Ignatius and the first Jesuits took their vows. Under the Presidency of Marshal MacMahon, the erection of the well-known Basilica was voted in 1873 by the French Chamber of Deputies, as a national Act of Reparation to the Sacred Heart. [Eo.]

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in the presence of all the pilgrims, our compartment was named after St. Martin! Deeply touched by the compliment, Papa at once went to thank the director of the pilgrimage, Mgr. Legoux, Vicar-General of Coutances. From this incident, he was afterwards often called Monsieur St. Martin.

Father Révérony observed me narrowly; I could see that he was doing so, even from a distance. At table, if I were not sitting opposite to him, he would bend forward so as to see and hear me better, and I think he was satisfied with his observations, since towards the end of the journey he seemed more favourably disposed. I say towards the end, for in Rome, as I will tell you shortly, he was far from being my advocate.

Before reaching the goal of our pilgrimage, we had to pass through Switzerland, with its lofty mountains, their snowy peaks lost in the clouds, its rushing torrents, its deep valleys profuse in luxuriant growths of giant ferns and purple heather.

Dear Mother, what good all those marvellous beauties of nature did to my soul, lifting it up to God who has lavished such masterpieces on our earth, though it is merely a land of exile destined to endure but a day! Now we were high up the mountain side, while at our feet a yawning abyss seemed ready to engulf us. A little later we were passing through some charming village with its cottages and graceful

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belfry, over which fleecy clouds floated lazily. Farther on, the calm, clear waters of a great lake would blend their azure tints with the glories of the setting sun.

I cannot tell you how much I was impressed with all this pageant so full of poetry and grandeur. It was a foretaste of the wonders of Heaven. Then there rose before me a picture of the religious life as it really is, with its constraints and its small daily sacrifices made in secret, and I understood how easy it would be to become wrapt up in self, and to forget the sublime end of one's vocation. "Later on," I thought, "when the time of trial comes—when I am enclosed in Carmel and shall be able to see but a little space of sky, I will recall this day and it will encourage me. I will make light of my own small troubles by thinking of the greatness and majesty of God; I will give my heart to Him alone and avoid the misfortune of attaching myself to fleeting trifles, now that I have had a glimpse of what is reserved for those who love Him."

Having contemplated the works of God, I turned to admire those of His creatures. The first Italian city we visited was Milan. Its white marble Cathedral, adorned with statues numerous enough to form a small town, furnished us with matter for much careful study. Leaving the more timid members of the party,

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whose nerve failed them after a short climb, Céline and I followed the bolder pilgrims, and on reaching the top could enjoy a far-reaching view of the city lying beneath us. On descending from those giddy heights, we began a series of carriage drives which lasted through the whole pilgrimage, curing me for ever of all desire for such a lazy style of locomotion.

The "Campo Santo"¹ filled us with rapture. The whole vast enclosure is covered with marble statues so exquisitely carved as to make one fancy that the chisel of genius has actually imparted life. The apparent negligence with which these wonders of art are everywhere scattered is but an additional charm. Their expression, too, so perfectly portrays a calm and Christian sorrow, that one is almost tempted to console them. Here it is a child throwing flowers on its father's grave, and as the delicate petals seem to fall through its fingers, the solid nature of the marble is forgotten. Elsewhere, a widow's light veil, and the ribbons that bind some young maiden's tresses, appear to float at the bidding of the breeze.

We were at a loss for words to express our admiration, when an elderly gentleman, French like ourselves, who followed us everywhere, regretting no doubt his inability to share

¹ Cemetery.

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our sentiments, said ill-humouredly: "What enthusiasts these French people are!" The poor man would, I think, have done better to have stayed at home. Far from enjoying the journey, he was for ever grumbling; nothing pleased him, neither cities, hotels, people, nor anything else. Papa, whose disposition was the exact opposite, and who was quite happy no matter what the circumstances were, tried to cheer his disagreeable neighbour, offering him his place in the carriage or elsewhere, and with his wonted kindness encouraging him to look on the bright side of things. But all to no purpose—nothing would make him contented. How many different types of people we saw and how interesting is the study of the world when one is about to leave it!

In Venice, the scene was completely changed. Instead of the bustle of a large town, there was a stillness only broken by the soft lapping of the waters mingled with the cries of the gondolier as he gracefully plied his oar. Assuredly it is a city of great charm, but likewise of sadness. Even the Palace of the Doges with all its splendours is affected by this spirit of melancholy. We passed through halls, the vaulted roofs of which have long ceased to re-echo the Governor's voice giving sentence of life or death. Unhappy prisoners no longer pine in the dark dungeons that are like living tombs.

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While visiting their dreadful cells I transported myself to the days of the Martyrs. Most gladly would I have dwelt in those sombre abodes had there been question of confessing my faith. But presently the guide's voice roused me from my reverie and I crossed the "Bridge of Sighs," so called because of the sighs uttered by the poor prisoners as they passed from their dungeons to death.

After leaving Venice, we visited Padua and there venerated the relic of St. Anthony's tongue; then Bologna, where rests St. Catherine's body, the face still bearing the impress of the kiss bestowed upon her by the Infant Saviour.

Joy filled my heart as we went towards Loreto.¹ Our Lady has chosen a truly ideal place for her Holy House. There everything is poor, simple, and primitive: the women still wear the graceful dress of the country and have not, as in other towns, adopted the modern Paris fashions. Everything enchanted me. But of the Holy House itself what can I say? Emotion overwhelmed me when I realised that I was

¹ When Acre fell in 1291, Palestine passed completely into the hands of the Saracens, but, on May 10, the house where God became man and where the Holy Family spent so many years, was transported by angels to Tersato, in Illyria. Three years later, it was carried across the Adriatic to the province of Ancona, in Italy, where after further journeys it was set down finally in the middle of the road at Loreto, in 1295. Such is the tradition, and it has been accredited by many Popes and Saints and strengthened by miracles. A strong defence of it will be found in *The Holy House of Loretto*, by Bishop Macdonald, of Victoria, B.C. (New York, 1913.) The basilica is the work of the famous Bramante.

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indeed beneath the very roof which had sheltered the Holy Family, that I was gazing on the same walls upon which Our Lord's divine eyes must have rested, and was treading the ground once moistened by the sweat of St. Joseph's toil. I saw the little chamber of the Annunciation, where the Blessed Virgin so often bore Jesus in her arms, after having borne Him there in her virginal womb. I even put my rosary into the bowl used by the Holy Child. How sweet are all these memories!

But our greatest joy was that of receiving Our Lord in His own house, and so becoming His living temples on the actual spot which He had honoured with His Divine Presence while on earth. According to Roman custom, the Blessed Sacrament is reserved at one altar in each church, and there only is It given to the faithful. At Loreto this altar is in the Basilica—a church built round the Holy House, and enclosing it as a casket of white marble might enclose a diamond of great price. But this did not satisfy us, for it was in the *diamond* and not in the casket that we wished to receive the Bread of Angels. With his wonted meekness, Papa followed the other pilgrims while his daughters, less easily pleased, went toward the *Santa Casa*, or Holy House.

We found that a priest was about to enjoy the privilege of celebrating Mass there, and on

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our telling him of our great wish he immediately asked for two hosts, which he placed on the paten. You can imagine, dear Mother, the ineffable joy of that Communion, joy which no words can express. What then will it be when we shall communicate eternally in the dwelling of the King of Heaven, when our happiness shall never draw to an end or be dimmed by the grief of a farewell? There will be no need to covet, as we did, fragments from the walls hallowed by the Divine Presence, for His house will be ours throughout all eternity. He will not give us His earthly home, He only shows it to us to make us love poverty and the hidden life. That which He reserves for us is the palace of His glory, where we shall no longer see Him veiled under the form of a little child or the appearance of bread and wine, but as He is, in the brightness of His infinite beauty.

Now I must speak of Rome, where I thought to find comfort and where I found the cross. It was night when we arrived and I was awakened from my sleep by the porters calling "*Roma!*" With enthusiasm the pilgrims caught up the cry, repeating "*Roma, Roma!*" Then I knew it was no dream. I was really in Rome.

Our first day, and perhaps the most enjoyable, was spent outside the walls, where everything retains the stamp of antiquity, whilst in the heart of Rome, with its hotels and shops, it would be

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easy to suppose oneself in Paris. That drive through the Roman Campagna has left a most pleasing impression on my mind.

How can I describe the feelings which thrilled me as I gazed on the Coliseum? At last, my eyes beheld the arena where so many martyrs had shed their blood for Christ. My first impulse was to stoop and kiss the ground hallowed by their glorious combats—but what a disappointment! The soil having been raised, the real arena now lies buried at a depth of about twenty-six feet. As the result of excavations, the centre part was nothing but one great mass of rubbish to which all entrance was rendered impossible by an insurmountable barrier, but in any case no one dared penetrate into the midst of those dangerous ruins. Was it possible, however, to be in Rome and not go down to the real Coliseum? That was out of the question. I paid scant attention to the guide's explanations, one thought only filled my mind—I must reach the arena.

We are told in the Gospel that St. Mary Magdalen remained close to the Sepulchre and stooping constantly to look in was at last rewarded by seeing two Angels. Like her, I also kept stooping and I saw, not two Angels, but that of which I was in search. A cry of joy escaped me and calling to Céline I told her to follow. We sprang forward together, scrambling

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over the ruins, which crumbled under our feet. In vain did Papa, astounded at our boldness, call loudly to us. We did not hear.

As the warriors of old felt their courage grow in the face of peril, so did our joy increase in proportion to the fatigue and danger we had to face before reaching the goal of our desires. With more foresight than I, Céline had listened to the guide, and she remembered he had mentioned a particular stone marked with a cross as showing the spot where the martyrs had fought the good fight. She set to work to find it, and having succeeded, we knelt together on that sacred ground, our souls united in one and the same prayer. My heart beat violently when I pressed my lips to the dust once reddened with the blood of the early Christians. And as I begged for the grace to be also a martyr for Jesus, I felt a deep conviction that my prayer was heard.

All this took but a short time, and after collecting a few stones we approached the walls to begin once more our perilous climb. So great was our happiness that Papa had not the heart to scold us; I could see that he was even proud of the daring we had displayed.

From the Coliseum we went to the Catacombs where Céline and I laid ourselves down in what had once been St. Cecilia's tomb, and we also carried away some of the earth sanctified by her

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holy remains. Before my journey to Rome I had not felt any special devotion to this Saint; but on visiting the house where she was martyred, and on hearing her proclaimed "Queen of harmony" because of the sweet song she sang in her heart to her Divine Spouse, I felt more than devotion to her, I felt real love as for a friend.

She became my chosen patroness as well as the keeper of my most intimate thoughts, for what appealed to me above all else was her perfect abandonment to God and her unbounded confidence in Him—virtues that enabled her to purify souls which till then had never desired any but earthly joys. St. Cecilia is like the Spouse in the Canticles and in her I find the Scriptural "*choir in an armed camp*."¹ Her life was one of melodious song in the midst of terrible trials, but this is not to be wondered at, since we read that "the Book of the Holy Gospels lay ever on her heart,"² while in her heart reposed the Spouse of Virgins.

Our visit to the Church of St. Agnes was also a sweet experience, and there I found a friend of my childhood. At first I was unsuccessful in my endeavour to procure you some little relic, dear Mother, but when men refused me God Himself came to my aid, for there fell at my feet a fragment of red marble from an ancient mosaic dating back to the time of the gentle Martyr. Was it not

¹ Cf. Cant. vii. 1.

² Office of St. Cecilia.

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touching that St. Agnes herself should give me a keepsake from her house?

We spent six days visiting the chief wonders of Rome, and on the seventh we saw the greatest of all—Leo XIII. I longed for and yet I dreaded that day, since on it depended my vocation. No answer had come from the Bishop of Bayeux, and now my one and only hope lay in the Holy Father's permission. But to obtain that permission I should have to ask it, and I trembled at the mere thought of daring to address the Pope in the presence of many Bishops, Archbishops, and Cardinals.

It was on Sunday morning, November 20, that we went to the Vatican, and at eight o'clock we assisted at the Pope's Mass in his own private chapel. His saintly bearing at the altar gave abundant evidence that the Vicar of Christ was in very truth the "Holy Father."

In the Gospel for that day there occurred these consoling words: "*Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a Kingdom.*"¹ My heart became filled with confidence. All my fears departed, and in their place was awakened a firm hope that the Kingdom of Carmel would soon be mine. I did not think just then of the other words of Our Lord. "*I dispose to you, as My Father hath disposed to Me, a Kingdom.*"² That is to say, I hold in reserve for you crosses and

¹ Luke xii. 32.

² Luke xxii. 32.

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trials, and through them you will become worthy to possess My Kingdom. "*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into His glory?*"¹ "*If you desire to sit on His right hand, you must drink the chalice which He has drunk Himself.*"²

The Holy Father's Mass was followed by a Mass of thanksgiving, and then the audience began. Leo XIII, wearing a cassock and cape of white, was seated on a dais, while round him were grouped various dignitaries of the Church. According to custom, each visitor, kneeling in turn and kissing, first the foot³ and then the hand of the Sovereign Pontiff, finally received his blessing. At this moment, two of the Noble Guard placed their hands on the pilgrim's shoulder as a sign to rise and pass on to the adjoining hall, thus leaving the way clear for the next.

No one uttered a word, but I was firmly determined to speak, when suddenly the Vicar-General of Bayeux, Father Révérony, who was standing to the right of His Holiness, announced in a loud voice that *he absolutely forbade anyone to address the Holy Father*. On hearing this my heart beat wildly as if it would break, and I looked for counsel to Céline who whispered: "*Speak!*"

¹ Luke xxii. 29.

² Cf. Matt. xx. 22.

³ The pilgrims kissed a cross embroidered on the shoe. Pius X, it may be remarked, abandoned this ancient custom. [Ed.]

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The next moment I was on my knees before the Pope. After I had kissed his foot he extended his hand, and then, raising my eyes which were blinded with tears, I said imploringly: "Holy Father, I have a great favour to ask of you." At once he bent down towards me until his head almost touched my own, while his piercing black eyes seemed to read my very soul. "Holy Father," I repeated, "in honour of your jubilee, allow me to enter Carmel at the age of fifteen."

Surprised and displeased, the Vicar-General said quickly: "Holy Father, this is a child who desires to become a Carmelite, and the superiors of the Carmel are looking into the matter." "Well, my child," said His Holiness, "do whatever the superiors may decide." Claspings my hands and resting them on his knee, I made one last effort: "Holy Father, if only you were to say 'Yes,' everyone else would be willing."

He looked fixedly at me, and said clearly, each syllable strongly emphasised: "Well, child! well, you will enter if it be God's Will!" Once again I was going to plead, when two of the Noble Guard bade me rise; seeing, however, that the request was of no avail, and that my hands remained resting on the knees of His Holiness, they took me by the arms and, with the help of Father Révérony, lifted me to my feet. Just as I was being thus forced to move,

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the dear Holy Father placed his hand gently on my lips, then raising it blessed me, while his eyes followed me as I turned away.

Papa was deeply distressed to see me coming from the audience in tears; he had passed out before me and so knew nothing of what had happened. To him, personally, the Vicar-General had shown unusual kindness, presenting him to the Sovereign Pontiff as the father of two Carmelites, and the Pope, as a special sign of benevolence, had placed his hand on Papa's head, appearing to mark him with a mysterious seal in the name of Christ Himself. Now that this father of *four* Carmelites is in Heaven, it is no longer the hand of Christ's Vicar which rests on his brow, prophesying his martyrdom: it is the hand of the Spouse of Virgins, the King of Heaven; and never again will the divine hand be removed from the head it has crowned with such glory.

My sorrow was indeed crushing. Nevertheless my soul remained in peace, inasmuch as I had done all that lay in my power to respond to my Divine Master's appeal. But the peace dwelt only in the depths, on the surface all was troubled, and Jesus seemed absent rather than silent, so hidden was He from view.

That day again the sun did not dare shine, and the beautiful Italian sky, now veiled with

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heavy clouds, mingled its tears unceasingly with mine. All was over! . . . My journey had failed in its purpose and for me had no further charms. And yet the Holy Father's last words should have consoled me—were they not truly prophetic? Despite all obstacles, God's Will has been done. He has not allowed creatures to do their will, but His.

For some time past I had offered myself to the Child Jesus, to be His little plaything; I told Him not to treat me like one of those precious toys which children only look at and dare not touch, but rather as a little ball of no value that could be thrown on the ground, tossed about, *pierced*, left in a corner, or pressed to His heart, just as it might please Him. In a word, all I desired was to amuse the Holy Child, to let Him play with me just as He felt inclined.

My prayer had been heard. In Rome, Jesus *pierced* His little plaything, anxious, no doubt to see what it contained. Then, satisfied with what He found, He let the ball drop and went to sleep. What was He doing throughout His sweet slumber, and what became of the toy He had cast aside? Jesus dreamed that He was still at play; that He took up the ball, or threw it down, or else rolled it far away; but that finally He pressed it to His heart and never again allowed it to slip from His hand. You can imagine, dear Mother, the desolation of the

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little ball as it lay neglected on the ground! Yet it continued to hope against hope.

Shortly after the fateful 20th of November, Papa went to call on Brother Simeon, founder and director of St. Joseph's College. There he met Father Révérony, whom he gently reproached for not having helped me through my difficult undertaking. Papa told the whole story to Brother Simeon, and the kind old man showed considerable interest in the matter, even going so far as to make notes about it. In conclusion, he remarked with emotion: "Such a thing would not happen in Italy."

On the day following that ever memorable morning of the audience, we started for Naples and Pompeii; Vesuvius did us the honour of emitting from its crater a thick volume of smoke accompanied by numerous loud reports. The traces of devastation over Pompeii are terrifying, and furnish a most striking proof of God's power: "*He looketh upon the earth and maketh it tremble; He toucheth the mountains and they smoke.*"¹ I should have liked to wander alone among its ruins, pondering on the instability of all things human, but such solitude was not to be thought of.

During our stay at Naples we went for a magnificent drive to the monastery of San Martino, which stands on the crest of a high hill overlooking the whole city. On our way

¹ Ps. ciii. 32.

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back to the hotel the horses took the bit between their teeth, and it is solely to our Guardian Angels that I attribute our safe arrival at the splendid hotel. The epithet is not too strong. During the pilgrimage we stayed at the grandest hotels, and I, certainly, had never been surrounded by such princely luxury.

How true is the saying: Wealth does not make happiness! I should have been a thousand times more contented under a thatched roof with the hope of entering Carmel, than I was amid marble staircases, gilded ceilings, and silken hangings, with my heart full of woe. I thoroughly realised that joy is not found in the things that surround us, but lives only in the soul, and that it may be possessed just as easily in an obscure prison as in the palace of a King. As a proof, I am now happier in Carmel, amid trials within and without, than I was in the world where I had everything I needed, even to the sweet joys of an ideal home.

Although my heart was heavy, outwardly I was the same as usual, for I was under the impression that no one had any knowledge of my petition to the Pope; but I was mistaken. On one occasion, when most of the pilgrims had gone to the refreshment-room and Céline and I were alone, Mgr. Legoux came to the door of our carriage. After carefully scrutinising me, he said with a smile: "Well, how is our little



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Carmelite?" I understood by this that my secret was known to the pilgrims, which fact was indeed further emphasised by the looks of sympathy I received—but happily no one spoke to me on the subject.

While at Assisi, visiting the place sanctified by St. Francis and St. Clare, I had a little adventure, thanks to having lost the buckle of my belt in the monastery. Some time elapsed before I was able to find it and put it on again, with the result that, when I reached the door, all the carriages had gone with the exception of one, and that one belonged to the Vicar-General of Bayeux! Should I try to catch one of those already out of sight and risk losing the train, or should I beg for a seat in Father Révérony's carriage? I decided on the latter and wiser plan.

My embarrassment was extreme, but I did my best to hide it and at the same time to explain my dilemma. He was now in a difficulty also, for every seat was already occupied, but the problem was quickly solved by one of the occupants giving me his place, and taking a seat beside the driver. I felt like a squirrel caught in a snare, and sat ill-at-ease in the midst of these important people, face to face, as it happened, with the most formidable of them all. Father Révérony was extremely kind, however, and every now and then interrupted his conversation to talk with me about Carmel,

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and to tell me that he would leave nothing undone towards helping me to enter when I was fifteen. This promise was as balm to my wounds, even though it did not put an end to all suffering. Having lost trust in creatures, it was on God alone I could lean.

Yet my distress did not hinder me from taking a deep interest in the holy places we visited. In the choir of the Carmelite church in Florence we saw the shrine of St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, and all the pilgrims were anxious that their rosaries should touch the Saint's tomb. My hand was the only one small enough to pass through the grating, so I was deputed for this important and rather lengthy task which I accomplished with pride and delight.

This was not the first time I had been so favoured. At *Santa Croce*, in Rome, when we venerated the relics of the True Cross, together with two of the Thorns and one of the Sacred Nails, I longed to examine them more closely. For this purpose I remained behind, and when the monk in charge was going to replace them on the altar, I asked if I might touch the precious treasures. He was quite willing, though doubtful whether I should succeed. I managed, however, to slip my little finger through one of the openings of the reliquary and was able to touch the Sacred Nail once bathed by the Blood of Our Saviour. It is easy to see that

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I behaved towards Our Lord like a child who looks on its Father's treasures as its own, and thinks it may do with them as it pleases.

After passing through Pisa and Genoa, we returned to France by one of the loveliest routes. Along part of the line we skirted the sea, and one day, as the result of a storm, the water rose so high that it seemed as if the waves might easily reach us. Farther on, we travelled through stretches of plain covered with orange trees, olives, and feathery palms. Then, as night fell, the numerous seaports became ablaze with lights, while the stars crept out and shone tremulously in the dark blue sky. Yet it was without regret that I watched this fairy picture fade from my eyes, for my heart was set elsewhere.

Meanwhile Papa was proposing to take me to Jerusalem, but although my natural inclination drew me to visit the places sanctified by Our Lord's footsteps, I was weary of earthly pilgrimages. I longed only for the beauties of Heaven, and it was to win them for souls that I pined to become a prisoner as quickly as possible. Alas! before the gates of my hallowed prison should open, I knew that I must continue to struggle and suffer; yet my trust in God did not grow less, and I still hoped to enter at Christmas.

Scarcely had we reached home when I went to the convent. What an interview that was! You will remember, dear Mother, how I left myself

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entirely in your hands, for my own resources were completely exhausted. You told me to write to the Bishop and remind him of his promise. I did so at once, and no sooner was the letter posted than I felt I should obtain the necessary permission without any further waiting; but each day brought a fresh disappointment. When the beautiful feast of Christmas dawned Jesus was still sleeping. He had left His little ball on the ground without even glancing at it.

The trial was a sore one, but He whose Heart is ever watching taught me that He works miracles for those whose faith is as a grain of mustard seed, in hope of thereby strengthening it; whilst for His intimate friends, for His Mother even, He did not work wonders until He had put their faith to the test. Did He not permit that Lazarus should die, even though Mary and Martha had sent word that he was sick? And at the marriage feast of Cana, when Our Lady asked her Divine Son to aid the master of the house, did He not answer that His hour had not yet come? But after the trial what a reward! Water was changed into wine, and Lazarus rose from the dead. In like manner did my Beloved act with His little Thérèse—having tried her long and often, He granted all her desires.

For my New Year's gift in 1888, Jesus again gave me His cross. Mother Mary of Gonzaga

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wrote to tell me that on the feast of the Holy Innocents, December 28, she had received the Bishop's answer authorising my immediate entry into Carmel, but that she herself had decided not to open its doors to me until after Lent. At the thought of such a long delay I could not restrain my tears: the dove had been released from her earthly ties only to find that the Ark itself refused to shelter her.

The three months of waiting were fruitful in sufferings, and still more so in other graces. At first indeed the thought came to me to throw off restraint and lead a life less strict than usual. But Our Lord made me understand how valuable those months were, and I resolved to give myself up more than ever to a serious and mortified life. When I say mortified, I do not allude to the penances practised by the Saints. Far from resembling those heroic souls who from their childhood use fast and scourge and chain to discipline the flesh, I made my mortifications consist simply in checking my self-will, keeping back an impatient answer, rendering a small service in a quiet way, and a hundred other similar things. By means of these trifles I prepared myself to become the spouse of Christ, and I can never tell you, dear Mother, how much the enforced delay helped me to grow in self-abandonment, humility, and other virtues.

CHAPTER VII

CARMEL AT LAST

MONDAY, April 9, 1888—Feast of the Annunciation, transferred from Passion-tide—was the day chosen for me to enter Carmel. On the eve we all gathered round the table where I was to take my place for the last time, and as if to increase the pain of parting—for farewells are in themselves heartrending—I heard the tenderest expressions of affection, just when I should have most liked to have been forgotten.

The following morning, after a last look at the dear home of my childhood, I set out for the convent where together we all heard Mass. At the Communion, when Our Divine Lord entered our hearts, I heard sobs on every side. I did not shed a tear, but as I led the way to the cloister door the beating of my heart became so violent that I wondered if I were going to die. Oh, the agony of that moment! One must have gone through it to understand it.

I embraced all my loved ones, then I knelt for Papa's blessing, and he too knelt as he blessed me through his tears. To see this old man giving his child to God while she was still

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in the springtime of life was a sight to gladden the Angels.

* * * * *

At length the door closed upon me, and I found a loving welcome in the arms of those dear sisters who, each in her turn, had been to me a mother, and likewise from the family of my adoption, whose tender devotedness is not dreamed of by the outside world. My desire was now accomplished, and my soul was filled with so deep a peace that it baffles all attempt at description. This peace has been my portion during the eight and a half years of my life within these walls, never forsaking me even amid the hardest trials.

Everything in the convent delighted me, especially our little cell,¹ and I could fancy myself in my longed-for desert. I repeat, however, that my happiness was calm and peaceful; not even a gentle breeze came to ruffle the tranquil waters over which my little barque sailed, not a cloud came to darken the blue sky. I was indeed amply rewarded for all I had gone through, and it was with untold joy that I kept repeating: "Now I am here for ever."

Nor was my joy merely a passing illusion destined to fade away. From illusions God in His

¹ In the spirit of poverty, nuns avoid using the word *my* as denoting private possession. Later on "our lamp," "our handkerchief," will occur. [Ed.]

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mercy has ever preserved me. I found the religious life just what I had expected: sacrifice was never a matter of surprise. Yet you know well, dear Mother, that from the very outset my path was strewn with thorns rather than with roses.

To begin with, I experienced great spiritual aridity, and in addition Our Lord permitted that Mother Mary of Gonzaga—sometimes unconsciously—should treat me with great severity. She never met me without finding fault, and I remember on one occasion when I had left a cobweb in the cloister she said to me before the whole community: “It is easy to see that our cloisters are swept by a child of fifteen. It is disgraceful! Go, and sweep away that cobweb, and be more careful in future.” On the rare occasions when I spent an hour with her for spiritual direction, she seemed to scold me nearly all the time, and what troubled me more than anything was that I did not understand how I was to correct my faults—my slow ways, for instance, and my want of thoroughness. It occurred to me one day that she would prefer me to spend my free time in work, rather than in prayer as was my custom. I therefore plied my needle most industriously without even raising my eyes. No one, however, knew of this, as I wished to be faithful to Our Lord and work for Him alone.

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While I was a postulant, our Novice-Mistress used to send me every afternoon at half-past four to weed the garden. This cost me a great deal, the more so because I was almost sure to meet Mother Mary of Gonzaga. On one of these occasions she remarked: "Really, this child does absolutely nothing! What are we to think of a postulant who must be sent out for a walk every day?" And this was her invariable method of dealing with me.

Yet, dear Mother, I thank God for having provided me with so sound and valuable a training: it was a priceless grace. What should I have become if, as the outside world believed, I had been made the pet of the community? Instead of seeing Our Lord in the person of my superiors I might only have considered the creature, and my heart, so carefully guarded in the world, would have been ensnared by human affection in the cloister. Happily I was preserved from such a disaster.

I can truly say that not only in what I have described, but in trials that affected me more keenly, suffering opened wide her arms to me from the first and I took her fondly to my heart. In the solemn examination before taking the vows I thus declared my reasons for entering Carmel—"I have come to save souls and especially to pray for priests." The end cannot be reached without adopting the means, and since Our

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Lord had made me understand that it was through the cross He would give me souls, the more crosses I encountered the stronger became my attraction to suffering. Unknown to anyone, this was the path I trod for fully five years: it was precisely the flower I wished to offer to Jesus—a hidden flower which keeps its perfume only for Heaven.

Two months after I entered Carmel, Father Pichon¹ was astonished at the workings of grace in my soul; he considered my fervour quite childlike and my path a most peaceful one. The spiritual direction given me by this holy priest in the confessional would have brought me great comfort, had it not been for the extreme difficulty I felt in opening my heart. Nevertheless I made a general confession to him and when I had finished, he said: "Before God, the Blessed Virgin, the Angels and all the Saints, I declare that you have never committed a mortal sin. You must thank God for this favour which He has bestowed upon you without any merit whatever on your part."

It was not difficult to believe that it was without merit on my part, and, fully conscious of my weakness and imperfection, my heart overflowed with gratitude, and gratitude alone. The fear that I might have stained my baptismal robe had greatly disturbed me, and this assurance

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coming from the lips of a director such as our mother St. Teresa desired—one, that is, “combining knowledge with virtue”—seemed to me to come from God Himself. “May Our Lord always be your Superior and your Novice Master!” added Father Pichon: and indeed He ever was, and my Director too. By this I do not mean to imply that I was reserved towards my superiors; on the contrary, I always tried to be as an open book to them.

Our Mistress was truly a Saint, a perfect type of the first Carmelites; she had to teach me how to work and so I was constantly with her. Yet, kind as she was beyond all I can say, and much as I loved and appreciated her, my soul did not expand under her guidance. Words failed me when I spoke to her of what passed in my soul, and thus my time of spiritual direction became a torture and a real martyrdom.

Apparently understanding my difficulty, one of our former Mothers once said to me during recreation: “I should think, child, you have not much to tell your superiors.” “Why do you think that, dear Mother?” I asked. “Because your soul is extremely simple. And when you are perfect you will become still more so, for the nearer one approaches God the simpler one becomes.” She was right; but although the great difficulty I experienced in opening my heart arose from simplicity, it was nevertheless

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a genuine trial. Now, however, without detriment to simplicity I can express my thoughts with the greatest ease.

I have already said that Our Lord Himself has always acted as my spiritual guide, for hardly had Father Pichon undertaken the care of my soul when his superiors sent him to Canada, and I could not hear from him more than once in the year. It was then that the Little Flower which had been transplanted to the mountain of Carmel, turned quickly to the Director of directors and gradually unfolded itself under the shadow of His cross, having for refreshing dew His tears and His blood, and for its radiant sun His adorable Face.

Until then I had not appreciated the beauties of the Holy Face, and it was you, my little Mother, who unveiled them to me. Just as you had been the first to leave our home for Carmel, so too were you the first to penetrate the mysteries of love hidden in the Face of our Divine Spouse. Having discovered them you showed them to me—and I understood. . . . More than ever did it come home to me in what true glory consists. He whose "*Kingdom is not of this world*"¹ taught me that the only kingdom worth coveting is the grace of being "unknown and esteemed as naught,"² and the joy that comes of self-contempt. I wished that, like

¹ John xvii. 36.

² 1mit. I. ii. 3.

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the Face of Jesus, mine "*should be, as it were, hidden and despised,*"¹ so that no one on earth should esteem me: I thirsted to suffer and to be forgotten. Most merciful has been the way by which the Divine Master has led me, never leaving unsatisfied any wish He may have inspired; that is why I have always found His bitter chalice full of sweetness.

At the end of May, Marie, our eldest sister, was professed, and Thérèse, the Benjamin, was given the privilege of crowning her with roses on that day of her mystical espousals—a joy which was quickly followed by a cross. Ever since Papa's first attack of paralysis, we realised that he was very easily tired, and in the course of our journey to Rome I noticed that he often seemed exhausted and in pain. But what struck me above all was his progress in holiness. He had so completely succeeded in mastering his natural impetuosity of character that earthly things failed to disturb him.

During our pilgrimage, for example, when we were in the train for days and nights at a stretch, some of the travellers grew weary, and to wile away the hours they played cards, becoming at times very noisy. One day they asked us to join in the game, but we refused on the pretext that we knew little about it. Unlike them, we found the time none too long to enjoy

¹ Isa. liii. 3.

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the magnificent views that everywhere met the eye. Their annoyance soon became manifest, and our dear Papa defended us quietly, suggesting that as pilgrims more of our time might well be given to prayer.

Unmindful of the respect due to age, one of the players thoughtlessly exclaimed: "Thank God, there are not many Pharisees!" Papa did not answer and seemed even to be pleased. Not long after this, he found an opportunity of shaking hands with the speaker, and the kindly action was accompanied by such pleasant words as to convey the impression that the rude remark had either not been heard or had been forgotten. But his habit of forgiveness, as you well know, did not date from this day only. Mamma and all who knew him bore witness that no uncharitable word ever passed his lips.

His faith and generosity were likewise proof against trial. This is how he announced my leaving home to one of his friends: "Thérèse, my little Queen, entered Carmel yesterday. God alone could ask such a sacrifice, but He helps me so powerfully that my heart is overflowing with joy even in the midst of tears."

To this faithful servant was due a reward worthy of his virtue, and to that reward he himself laid claim. Do you remember the day on which he said to us in the parlour: "Children, I have just returned from Alençon, and there,

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in the church of Notre Dame, I received such graces, such untold consolation, that I made this prayer: 'My God, it is too much—I am too happy. It is impossible to reach Heaven in this way; I must suffer something for Thee!—and I offered myself as a . . .'" The word *victim* died on his lips—he dared not pronounce it before us, but we understood.

You know but too well, dear Mother, all the sad tale,¹ and it is needless for me to dwell on those heart-rending memories.

* * * * *

My clothing day was now drawing near, and Papa having recovered, contrary to all expectations, from a second attack of paralysis, the Bishop fixed the ceremony for January 10. The time of waiting had been long, but the beautiful feast came at last. Nothing was missing, not even snow.

Have I ever told you how fond I am of snow? Even when I was quite small its whiteness entranced me. Why this strange fancy, I wonder? Perhaps, because being a little winter flower, my eyes first saw the earth clad in its beautiful mantle. It was therefore natural that on the occasion of my clothing ceremony, I should wish to see it arrayed like myself in spotless white. The weather, however, was so mild on the preceding day that it might have been spring

¹ See note on p. 157.

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and I no longer dared hope for a fall of snow. The morning of the tenth bringing no change, I gave up my childish desire as impossible of realisation, and so went out of the convent for the ceremony.

Papa met me at the enclosure door, his eyes full of tears, and pressing me to his heart he exclaimed: "Ah! here is my little Queen!" Then giving me his arm, we made our solemn entry into the public chapel. This was indeed his day of triumph, his last feast here below; the sacrifice was now complete—his children belonged to God.¹ Céline had already told him that later on she also meant to exchange the world for Carmel, whereupon he cried in a transport of joy: "Come, let us visit the Blessed Sacrament together and thank God for all the graces He has bestowed upon our family, especially for the great honour He has done me in choosing His spouses from my household. Were I possessed of anything better I would hasten to offer it to Him." That something better was himself, "*and God received him as a victim of holocaust; He tried him as gold in the furnace, and found him worthy of Himself.*"²

After the ceremony in the public chapel, I re-entered the convent and the Bishop intoned

¹ Léonie had entered a Convent of the Poor Clares, but the Order proving too austere for her delicate health, she had been obliged to return home. She afterwards became a Visitation Nun at Caen, taking the name of Sister Francis Teresa. [CARMEL.] ² Cf. Wisdom iii. 5, 6.

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the *Te Deum*. One of the clergy remarked to him that this hymn of thanksgiving was usually sung at profession only, but, once begun, it was continued to the end. And indeed it was fitting that the feast should be thus complete since in it were united all other joyful days?

The moment I again set foot in the enclosure my eyes fell on the pretty statue of the Holy Child smiling at me amid flowers and lights;¹ then, turning towards the quadrangle *I saw it was all covered with snow!* What a delicate attention on the part of Jesus! To gratify the least wish of His little spouse He actually made her a gift of the snow. Where is the creature with power enough to make even one flake fall, to please his beloved? Owing to the warm temperature everyone was filled with amazement, but, hearing of my desire, many have since described this event as “the little miracle” of my clothing day, while at the same time expressing surprise at the strange fancy I displayed. So much the better—such things help to show forth still more the wonderful condescension of the Spouse of Virgins, of Him who loves lilies white as the snow.

After the ceremony the Bishop entered the enclosure and gave me many proofs of his fatherly tenderness. Before all the priests who

¹ Until her death Sœur Thérèse had charge of this statue, of the Holy Child Jesus. [CARMEL.]

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were present, he spoke of my visit to Bayeux and my journey to Rome; nor did he forget the incident of how I had put up my hair. Laying his hand on my head he blessed me affectionately, and as he did so my mind dwelt with exceeding sweetness on the caresses Our Lord would soon lavish upon me before all His Saints, so that this gracious blessing came as a foretaste of Heaven.

I have said that January 10 was Papa's day of triumph. I likened it to the feast of Christ's entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, for his day of glory was followed by a dolorous passion just as in the case of Our Divine Master: and even as the agony of Jesus pierced the heart of His holy Mother, so were our hearts deeply wounded by the humiliations and sufferings of him whom we loved best on earth.

I remember how in the month of June, 1888, when we were afraid Papa might be stricken with cerebral paralysis, I surprised our Novice Mistress by saying, "I am suffering a great deal, Mother, yet I feel I can suffer still more." I did not then suspect the cross that awaited us. Neither could I know that on February 12, one month after my clothing day, our beloved Father would drink so deeply of such a bitter chalice.¹

¹ On this day, M. Martin was removed from Lisieux to a private asylum, where he remained for three years. At the end of that time, the paralysis having become general, Céline was able to bring him back to Lisieux, where he lived for three years more. He died at his

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I no longer protested that I could suffer more, and as there are no words to express our grief, I shall not attempt to describe it here. . . .

In Heaven we shall delight to dwell on those dark days, and even here the three years of our dear father's martyrdom seem to me the sweetest and most fruitful of our lives. I would not exchange them for the most sublime ecstasies, and in gratitude for such a priceless treasure my heart cries out: "*Blessed be Thou for the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us.*"¹

Dear Mother, how *sweet* and precious was this *bitter* chalice, since from each stricken heart there came only sighs of grateful love. We no longer walked—we ran, we flew along the road of perfection.

Though still living in its midst, Léonie and Céline were no longer of the world; the letters they wrote to us about this time are full of the most edifying resignation, and when Céline came to see me, how sweet was our intercourse! Far from separating us, the grating of the Carmel united us more closely: the same ideas, the same desires, the same love for Our Lord and for souls made our very life. No word concerning the things of this earth entered into our conversation; but just as in former days when seated

brother-in-law's house, Chateau de la Musse, in the department of Eure, July 29, 1894. At the last moment he recovered full possession of his faculties and fixed upon Céline, then alone by his side, a look of the most tender gratitude. [CARMEL.] 1 Cf. Ps. xxxix. 15.

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at the attic window our eyes were raised eagerly to Heaven, so now our hearts yearned for the joy that is beyond all time and space, and for the sake of our eternal happiness we chose to suffer and be despised here below.

Though my suffering seemed to have reached its height, its attraction for me never lessened, and soon my soul shared in the trials the heart had to bear. My spiritual aridity increased and I found no comfort in Heaven or on earth; yet amid these waters of tribulation so eagerly thirsted for, I was the happiest of mortals.

Thus passed the time of my betrothal—a time far too long for me. At the close of my year of novitiate, Mother Mary of Gonzaga told me I must not think of profession as the Superior of the Carmel had expressly forbidden it, and I must wait for eight months more. Though at first I found great difficulty in being resigned to such a sacrifice, divine light soon penetrated my soul.

At this time I was using Surin's *Foundations of the Spiritual Life* for my meditations, and it was brought home to me one day during prayer that my too eager desire to take my vows was mingled with much self-love. Since I belonged to Our Lord and was His little plaything to amuse and console Him, it was for me to do His Will and not for Him to do mine. I understood also that on her wedding day a bride would be scarcely

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pleasing to the bridegroom if she were not arrayed in magnificent attire. Now, I had not as yet laboured with that end in view. Turning, therefore, to Our Lord, I said to Him; "I do not ask Thee to hasten the day of my profession, I will wait as long as it may please Thee, but I cannot bear that my union with Thee should be delayed through any fault of mine. I will set to work and prepare a wedding dress adorned with all kinds of precious stones, and when Thou findest it sufficiently rich I am certain that nothing will keep Thee from accepting me as Thy spouse." Then with renewed zest I took up the task of making myself ready.

Since the day of my clothing I had received abundant lights on religious perfection and particularly on the vow of poverty. Whilst I was a postulant I liked to have nice things for my own use, and to find what was needful ready to hand. Jesus bore with me patiently. He does not disclose everything at once to souls, but as a rule gives His light little by little. At the beginning of my spiritual life—between the age of thirteen and fourteen—I often wondered what greater knowledge of perfection could come to me later on, for I thought it impossible to acquire a better understanding of it than I had then. It was not long, however, before I learnt that in this matter the more one advances, the farther one seems from the goal, and now I am

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not only resigned to seeing myself always imperfect, but the thought of it even affords me joy.

To return to the lessons Our Lord deigned to teach me. One evening, after Compline, I searched in vain for our lamp on the shelves where they are kept. I concluded rightly that a Sister had taken it believing it to be her own, and during the time of the "Great Silence"¹ I could not ask to have it back. Must I then remain in darkness for a whole hour, just when I had counted on doing a great deal of work? Without the interior light of grace I should undoubtedly have pitied myself, but in the midst of the darkness I found my soul divinely illumined. It was brought home to me that poverty consists in being deprived not only of what is convenient but also of what is necessary, so that I felt happy instead of aggrieved.

About this time I began to have a preference for whatever was ugly and inconvenient, so much so, that I rejoiced when a pretty little water jug was taken from our cell and replaced by a big one, badly chipped all over. I also made great efforts not to excuse myself, but I found this very difficult, especially with our Novice Mistress from whom I was unwilling to hide anything.

My first victory of the kind, though not a great one, cost me a good deal. It happened

¹ In all religious houses the time from the close of night prayers until after the morning meditation is a period of strictest silence. [Ed.]

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that a small jar which had been left by a window was found broken. Believing that I was the culprit our Novice Mistress reproached me for leaving it about, adding that I was most untidy and must be more careful for the future. She seemed displeased, so without saying a word in self-defence I kissed the ground and promised to be more orderly. I was so little advanced in perfection that even trifles like these cost me dear, as I have said, and I found it necessary to console myself with the thought that all would come to light on the day of Judgment.

I endeavoured, above all, to practise little hidden acts of virtue, such as folding the mantles which the Sisters had forgotten and being on the alert to render them help. I had also a great attraction towards penance, although I was not allowed to satisfy the desire. Indeed the only mortification I was permitted was the overcoming of my self-love, which did me far more good than any bodily penance could have done. Meanwhile Our Lady helped me with my wedding dress and no sooner was it completed than all obstacles vanished and my profession was fixed for September 8, 1890.

All that I have set down in such few words might have filled many pages, but those pages will never be read upon earth. . . .

CHAPTER VIII

PROFESSION OF SŒUR THÉRÈSE

SHALL I tell you, dear Mother, of the retreat before my profession? Far from feeling consoled, I went through it in a state of utter spiritual desolation—seemingly abandoned by God. Jesus slept in my barque, as was His wont. But how rarely will souls allow Him to sleep in peace! Wearied with making continual advances, our good Master readily avails Himself of the repose I offer Him, and in all probability will sleep on till my great and everlasting retreat; this, however, rather rejoices than grieves me.

Such a frame of mind is sufficient to show that I am in truth no Saint, for I ought not to rejoice in my dryness of soul, but attribute it rather to my want of fervour and fidelity. I suppose I ought to be distressed that I so often fall asleep during meditation, and thanksgiving after Holy Communion, but I reflect that little children, asleep or awake, are equally dear to their parents; that to perform operations doctors put their patients to sleep; and finally, that "*The Lord knoweth our frame. He remembereth that we are but dust.*"¹

¹ Ps. cii. 14.

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Yet apparently barren as was my retreat—and those which followed have seemed no less so—I received unconsciously many interior lights on the best means of pleasing God and practising virtue. I have often observed that Our Lord will never give me a store of provisions, but nourishes me at each moment with food that is always new. I find it within my soul without knowing how it has come. I believe, quite simply, that it is Jesus Himself, hidden in my poor heart, who is mysteriously at work inspiring me from hour to hour with whatever He wishes me to do.

Just before my profession I received the Holy Father's blessing through the kindness of Brother Simeon, and I am certain that this precious blessing helped me through the most furious storm of my whole spiritual life.

On the eve of the great day, usually so full of sweetness for a novice, my vocation suddenly appeared to me as unreal as a dream. The devil—for it was he—assured me that I was wholly unsuited for the Carmelite life, and that by entering on a way to which I was not called I was deceiving my superiors. The darkness became so intense that one fact alone stood out clear—I had no vocation and must return to the world.

I cannot describe all I went through. What was to be done in face of such a difficulty?

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feast was heavily *veiled* in sorrow. Papi was too ill to come and bless his "little Queen" and at the last moment Mgr. Hugonin, who should have presided at the ceremony, was prevented from doing so; for other reasons, too, it was a day of gloom. And yet through it all, my soul was profoundly at peace. It pleased Our Lord, however, that on this occasion I should not be able to restrain my tears . . . and they were not understood. True, I had borne far harder trials without shedding a tear, but then I had been helped by special graces, whereas on that day Jesus left me to myself and I soon showed my weakness.

Eight days after I had taken the veil our cousin Jeanne was married to Dr. La Néele and at her next visit I heard of all the little attentions she lavished on her husband. I was greatly impressed and I determined it should never be said that a woman in the world did more for her husband than I for my Beloved. Filled with fresh ardour, I strove with increased earnestness to please my Heavenly Spouse, the King of Kings, who had deigned to honour me by a divine alliance.

When I saw the letter announcing our cousin's marriage, I thought I would amuse myself by composing an invitation which I read to the novices in order to bring home to them what had struck me so forcibly—that earthly unions, however

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glorious, were as nothing compared to the titles of a Spouse of Christ.

GOD ALMIGHTY, Creator of Heaven and Earth, Sovereign Ruler of the Universe, and the MOST GLORIOUS VIRGIN MARY, Queen of the Heavenly Court, announce to you the Spiritual Espousals of Their August Son, JESUS, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, with little THÉRÈSE Martin, now Princess and Lady of His Kingdoms of the Holy Childhood and the Passion, assigned to her in dowry by her Divine Spouse, from which Kingdoms she holds her titles of nobility—OF THE CHILD JESUS AND OF THE HOLY FACE. It was not possible to invite you to the Wedding Feast which took place on the Mountain of Carmel, September 8, 1890—the Heavenly Court was alone admitted—but you are requested to be present at the At Home which will take place to-morrow, the Day of Eternity, when Jesus, the Son of God, will come in the clouds of Heaven, in the splendour of His Majesty, to judge the living and the dead. The hour being uncertain, you are asked to hold yourselves in readiness and to watch.¹

I prepared myself by a fervent novena for the retreat in the year following my profession, as I anticipated that it would be a time of severe

¹ This letter, the style of which may sound strange to English ears, is modelled closely on the somewhat quaint letters whereby French parents of the better class announce the marriage of their children. Such letters of "*faire-part*" are issued in the name of relatives to the third or fourth degree. [Ed.]

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can understand, dear Mother, how great was the light and consolation that followed.

The next Sunday I asked Mother Genevieve whether she had received any revelation as to my state, but she assured me she had not, which only increased my admiration, showing as it did, how intimately Jesus lived in her soul, directing her every word and action. Such is the holiness I desire, a holiness that is truly holy and free from all illusions.

On the day this dear Mother's exile ended, I received a very special grace. It was the first time I had assisted at a death-bed, and though the sight impressed me deeply, I must confess that during the two hours watching, a kind of torpor crept over me. I was grieving at my insensibility when, at the moment her soul passed to God, an extraordinary change was wrought in my whole being. In an instant I was filled with an indescribable joy and fervour, as if the soul of our blessed foundress had made me a sharer in the happiness she already possessed—for I am certain she went straight to Heaven. One day I had said to her: "You will not go to Purgatory, dear Mother." "I hope not," she answered gently. Assuredly God would not disappoint a trust so full of humility, and in the many favours we have received through her intercession lies the proof that her hope was fulfilled.

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Each of the Sisters hastened to claim something belonging to our beloved Mother, and you know the precious relic I treasure. During her agony I had noticed a tear glistening on her eyelash like a diamond, and that tear, the last of all those she had shed on earth, never fell; I saw it still shining as her body lay exposed in the choir. So when evening came I made bold to approach unseen, with a little piece of linen, and now I am the happy possessor of the last tear of a Saint.

I attach no importance to my dreams and indeed they seldom have any special meaning, though I often wonder how it is that since I think of God all through the day, my mind does not dwell on Him more in my sleep. As a rule I dream of woods and flowers, of brooks and the sea. I nearly always meet pretty children, or else chase birds or butterflies such as I have never before seen. But if my dreams are sometimes poetical, they are never mystical. One night, however, after Mother Genevieve's death, I had a more consoling one: I saw her giving to each of us something which had belonged to herself. When my turn came her hands were empty and I feared I was not to receive anything, but she looked at me lovingly and repeated three times: "To you I leave my heart."

Towards the close of 1891, about a month after that death so precious in the sight of God,

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an epidemic of influenza broke out in the convent. I had only a slight attack and was able to be about with two other Sisters. It is impossible to imagine the heart-rending state of our Carmel during those days of mourning. The worst sufferers were nursed by those who could hardly stand on their feet; death was all around us, and no sooner had one Sister breathed her last than we had to leave her and turn our attention to another.

My nineteenth birthday was saddened by the death of our Sub-Prioress. Together with the infirmarian I assisted at her last agony. Two more deaths followed in quick succession. During this time I did all the sacristy work unaided, and I sometimes wonder how I was equal to it.

One morning when it was time to rise I had a presentiment that Sister Magdalen was dead. The corridor, which should have been already lit, was in absolute darkness; no one as yet had left her cell. I determined to go in to Sister Magdalen's, and found her lying fully dressed upon her bed. I was not in the least afraid, and hastening to the sacristy quickly brought a blessed candle and placed a wreath of roses on her head. Amid all this desolation I felt the Hand of God, and I knew that His Heart was watching over us. It was without a struggle that our dear Sisters left this life to enter on a happier one;

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they lay as if asleep, with an expression of heavenly peace on their faces.

Throughout those trying weeks I had the unspeakable joy of receiving Holy Communion every day. It was indeed a sweet grace. Jesus treated me as a spoilt child, for a longer time even than His more faithful spouses. After the influenza epidemic He came to me daily for several months, a privilege not shared by the Community. I had not sought this favour, but it brought me untold happiness to be united day after day to Him whom my soul loved.

I rejoiced also in being able to touch the sacred vessel and to prepare the altar linen on which Our Lord was to be laid. I felt that I must increase in fervour, and often recalled those words addressed to a saintly deacon: "Be ye holy, ye who carry the Vessels of the Lord."¹

And now, dear Mother, what can I tell you about my thanksgivings after Communion, not only then but always? There is no time when I have less consolation—yet this is not to be wondered at, since it is not for my own satisfaction that I desire to receive Our Lord but solely to give Him pleasure?

Picturing my soul as a piece of waste ground, I beg of Our Lady to take away my imperfections, which are as heaps of rubbish, and to raise upon it a spacious pavilion worthy of

¹ Words used in the ordination ceremony. [Ed.]

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Heaven and beautify it with her own adornments. I next invite thither all the Angels and Saints to sing canticles of love, and it seems to me that Jesus is well pleased to find Himself welcomed with such magnificence, while I, too, share His joy. But this does not keep off distractions and drowsiness, and I often resolve to continue my thanksgiving throughout the day in amends for having made it so badly in choir.

You see, dear Mother, that my way is not the way of fear; I can always find means to be happy and to profit by my failings, and Our Lord Himself encourages me to do so. Once, contrary to my usual custom, I felt troubled on approaching the Holy Table. For several days the number of Hosts having been insufficient, I only received a small part of one, and on this particular morning the foolish thought came that if the same thing happened again I would understand that Our Lord did not care to come into my heart. I approached the rails . . . for a moment the priest hesitated, then gave me *two entire Hosts!* What a loving response!

I have indeed much for which to be thankful to God, dear Mother, and I want to tell you something in all simplicity. He has shown the same mercy to me as to King Solomon. All my desires have been satisfied: not only desires of perfection but even those of which I understood the vanity, in theory if not in practice.

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Having always looked upon you as my ideal I wanted to be like you in everything. You used to paint charming miniatures, to write beautiful poems, and all this awakened in me a desire to learn painting,¹ to express my thoughts in verse, and to do some good to those around me. I would not ask for these natural gifts, so my wish remained hidden in my heart. But Jesus, hidden also there, once more designed to show me the vanity of all that passes. To the astonishment of the community I succeeded in painting several pictures, in writing some poems, and in doing good to certain souls. And just as Solomon, *"turning to all the works which his hand had wrought, and to the labours wherein he had laboured in vain, saw in all things vanity and vexation of mind,"*² so experience taught me that the sole happiness of this earth consists in being hidden and remaining in total ignorance of created things. I understood that without love, even the most brilliant deeds count for nothing. Far from doing me any harm, these gifts which Our Lord showered upon me, drew my soul more closely to Him and

¹ Thérèse had kept this wish concealed from the days of her childhood, and later in life she made the following confidence: "I was ten the day Papa told Céline that she was to begin painting lessons and I felt quite envious. Then turning to me he said: 'Well, little Queen, would you like to learn painting too?' I was going to say: 'Yes indeed I should,' when Marie remarked that I had not the same taste for it as Céline. She carried her point and I said nothing, thinking it was a splendid opportunity to make a big sacrifice to Our Lord; but I was so anxious to learn that even now I wonder how I was able to keep silence." [CARMEL.]

² Eccl. ii. 11.

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made me see that He alone is unchangeable, that He alone can fill the vast abyss of my desires.

While speaking of my desires, I must tell you about others of a different kind, which the Divine Master has deigned to grant—childish desires, like the wish for snow on my clothing day. You know, dearest Mother, how fond I am of flowers, and that when I made myself a prisoner at the age of fifteen, I gave up for ever the delight of rambling through meadows bright with the treasures of spring. Yet I never possessed so many flowers as I have since entering Carmel. In the world young men present choice flowers to their betrothed and in like manner Jesus did not forget me. I received for His altar an abundance of all the flowers I loved best: cornflowers, poppies, marguerites—one little friend alone was missing, the purple vetch. I longed to see it again, and, quite recently, it came to gladden me, and to show me that in the least things as in the greatest, God gives a hundred-fold, even in this world, to those who have left all things for love of Him.

One desire, the dearest of all, and for many reasons the most difficult of attainment, still remained unsatisfied—my wish to see Céline enter the Carmel of Lisieux. I had made a sacrifice of this, however, and I committed the care of my loved sister to God alone. I was willing she should go to far distant lands if

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need be, but I wanted to see her, like myself, the spouse of Our Lord. Aware that in the world she was exposed to dangers I had never known, I suffered intensely: my affection for her was that of a mother rather than of a sister and I was filled with solicitude for the welfare of her soul.

One evening when she was to go to a dance with my aunt and cousins, I felt, without knowing why, more anxious than usual, and I implored Our Lord to hinder her from dancing. My prayer was heard and not only was His future spouse prevented from dancing, graceful dancer though she was, but her partner likewise, who found himself obliged to walk up and down most solemnly with her, to the astonishment of everyone. Finally, the poor young man slipped away feeling very much ashamed and did not dare appear again that evening. This unique occurrence increased my confidence in Our Lord, proving clearly to me that He had already set His seal on Céline's brow.

On July 29 of last year, God called to Himself our saintly and much tried Father. During the two years previous to his death he had lived in our uncle's house, where he was surrounded with the tenderest care, but owing to his helpless condition we saw him only once during the whole course of his illness. It was a sad interview! You remember it, dear Mother, and

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how at the moment of parting he raised his eyes, then, pointing upwards, said in a voice choked with tears: "*In Heaven*"!

Now that he had reached that beautiful Home the last ties which bound his consoling angel to the world were severed. When Angels have accomplished their mission here below they take instant flight to God. Is not that why they have wings? And Céline likewise tried to fly to Carmel but the difficulties which met her on all sides seemed insurmountable. When matters were going from bad to worse, I said to Our Lord, one morning after Holy Communion: "Thou knowest, dear Jesus, how earnestly I have desired that the trials my dear Father endured should serve as his purgatory. I long to learn if my wish has been granted, but I do not ask Thee to speak to me, all I want is a sign. Thou art aware that one of our community is strongly opposed to Céline's entrance into Carmel—if she withdraw her opposition I shall regard it as an answer from Thee, and in this way I shall know if my Father went straight to Heaven."

God, who holds in His hand the hearts of His creatures and inclines them as He wills, deigned in His infinite mercy and ineffable condescension to change that Sister's mind. After my thanksgiving she was the first person I met, and with tears in her eyes she spoke to me of Céline's entrance, expressing a keen desire

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to see her amongst us. Shortly afterwards, His Lordship the Bishop of Bayeux removed the last obstacles, thus allowing you, dear Mother, without the least hesitation, to open the door of our ark¹ to the poor exiled dove.

Now I have no further desire unless it be to love Jesus even unto folly! Love alone draws me. I wish for neither suffering nor death, yet both are precious to me, and I have long called upon them as the messengers of joy. Already I have suffered much, already it has seemed to me that my barque was nearing the Eternal Shore. From my earliest years I believed the *Little Flower* would be gathered in her springtime, but now the spirit of self-abandonment is my sole guide—I have no other compass. I am no longer able to ask eagerly for anything save the perfect accomplishment of God's designs on my soul. I can indeed repeat these words of our Father, St. John of the Cross:

“I drank deep in the cellar of my Friend,
And, coming forth again,
Knew naught of all this plain,
And lost the flock I erst was wont to tend.
My soul and all its wealth I gave to be His Own;
No more I tend my flock, all other work is done,
And all my exercise is love alone.”²

¹ Céline entered the Carmel on September 14, 1894, and took the name of Sister Genevieve of St. Teresa. [CARMEL.]

² Spiritual Canticle: Stanzas 18 and 20.

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Or rather :

“Love hath so wrought in me,
Since I have known its sway,
That all within me, whether good or ill,
It makes subservient to the end it seeks,
And soon transforms my soul into itself.”¹

How sweet is the way of Love! True, one may fall and be unfaithful to grace, but Love, knows how to draw profit from everything, and quickly consumes whatever may be displeasing to Our Lord, leaving in the heart only a deep and humble peace.

I have received much spiritual light through the works of St. John of the Cross, and at the age of seventeen and eighteen they were my only food. Afterwards, all spiritual authors left me cold; as they do still. However beautiful and touching a book may be, my heart does not respond and I read without understanding, or if I understand I cannot meditate.

In my helplessness, the Holy Scriptures and the *Imitation* are of the greatest assistance; I find in them a hidden manna, pure and genuine. It is from the Gospels, however, that I derive most help in the time of prayer; I find in their pages all that my poor soul needs, and I am always discovering there new lights and hidden mysterious meanings. I know and I have experienced that “*The Kingdom of God is within us*,”² that Our

¹ Hymn to the Deity.

² Luke xvii. 21.

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Master has no need of book or teacher to instruct a soul. The Teacher of teachers instructs without sound of words, and though I have never heard Him speak, yet I know He is within me, always guiding and inspiring me; and just when I need them, lights, hitherto unseen, break in upon me. As a rule, it is not during prayer that this happens but in the midst of my daily duties.

Dear Mother, after so many graces may I not sing with the Psalmist that "*the Lord is good, that His Mercy endureth for ever*"?¹ It seems to me that if every soul were to receive such favours God would be loved to excess and feared by none: I believe that every least wilful fault would be avoided out of love, without thought of fear.

Yet all souls cannot be alike. They must differ, so that each divine perfection may receive special honour. To me He has manifested His INFINITE MERCY and in this resplendent mirror I contemplate His other attributes. There, each appears radiant with *Love*; His Justice perhaps more than the rest. What a sweet joy to think that Our Lord is just—that He takes into account our weakness and knows so well the frailty of our nature. What then need I fear? Will not the God of infinite justice, who deigns to pardon lovingly the sins of the Prodigal Son, be also *just* to me "*Who am always with Him.*"²

¹ Ps. ciii 1.

² Luke xv. 31.

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In the year 1895, I received the grace to understand better than ever how much Jesus desires to be loved. While thinking one day of those who offer themselves as victims to the Justice of God, and who turn aside the punishment due to sinners, taking it upon themselves,¹ I felt such an offering to be both noble and generous. I was very far, nevertheless, from feeling myself drawn to make it and from the depths of my heart I cried: "O my Divine Master, shall Thy Justice alone find atoning victims? Has not *Thy Merciful Love* need of them also? On every side it is ignored and rejected . . . those hearts on which Thou wouldst lavish it turn to creatures and seek their happiness in the miserable satisfaction of a moment, rather than cast themselves into Thy arms—into the ecstatic fires of Thy infinite Love.

O my God, must that Love which is disdained lie hidden in Thy Heart? It seems to me that if Thou shouldst find souls offering themselves as a holocaust to Thy Love, Thou wouldst consume them rapidly and wouldst be pleased to set free those flames of infinite tenderness now imprisoned in Thy Heart. If Thy Justice which avenges itself upon earth must needs be satisfied, how much more must Thy Merciful Love desire to inflame souls since "*Thy Mercy*

¹ This is the chief aim of the great Arch-Confraternity of the Sacred Heart established in the Sacred Heart Basilica, Montmartre, Paris. [Ed.]

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reacheth even to the Heavens" ?¹ O Jesus, permit that I may be that happy victim—consume Thy holocaust with the fire of Divine Love!

Dear Mother, you who allowed me to offer myself thus to God—you know the flames of love, or rather the oceans of grace, which filled my soul when I made that *Act of Oblation* on June 9, 1895.² Since that day love surrounds and penetrates me; at every moment God's Merciful Love renews and purifies me, cleansing my soul from all trace of sin. I do not fear Purgatory, for though I know I do not deserve even to enter with the Holy Souls into that place of expiation, I also know that the fire of Love is more sanctifying than the fire of Purgatory, that Jesus could not will useless suffering for us, and that He would not inspire me with the desires I feel were He not willing to fulfil them.

This is all I can tell you, my beloved Mother, of the story of your little Thérèse. You know what she is, and what Jesus has done for her, far better than she herself does, so you will forgive her for having greatly abridged the account of her religious life.

How will it end, this "History of a Little White Flower"? . . .

¹ Cf. Ps. xxxv. 6.

² It was on June 9, 1914, the nineteenth anniversary of her holocaust, that the Congregation of Rites decided upon the Introduction of her Cause of Beatification. The Roman Process began in March, 1915. [Ed.]

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Will she be gathered in all her freshness, or will she be transplanted to other shores? . . . I cannot say; but this I know, that the Mercy of God will everywhere follow her, and that she will for ever bless the Mother who gave her to God. She will rejoice through eternity at being one of the flowers in that dear Mother's crown, and will sing together with her the ever-new canticle of thanksgiving and of love.¹

¹ Here ends the first manuscript, and the story of Sœur Thérèse as written for her sister, Mother Agnes of Jesus. [Ed.]

CHAPTER IX

THE NIGHT OF THE SOUL

DEAR Reverend Mother,¹ you have expressed the wish that I should finish singing the Mercies of the Lord,² and though I will not protest, I cannot help feeling somewhat amused as once again I take up my pen. What I am about to relate you know as well as I do, nevertheless I obey. I do not even ask of what use this manuscript could be, and should you burn it before my eyes without having read it, I should not be in the least distressed.

It is the general opinion of the community that you have spoilt me ever since I entered Carmel. It is written, however, that "*Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart.*"³ I thank you, Mother, for not having spared me; Jesus knew that His Flower was too weak to take root without the life-giving waters of humiliation, and it is to you she owes that inestimable blessing.

1 Chapters IX and X were addressed to the Reverend Mother Mary of Gonzaga and were written later. [CARMEL.]

2 "*The Mercies of the Lord I shall sing for ever.*" Ps. lxxxviii. v. 1. This was the motto of St. Teresa of Avila. Cf. also pp. 13 and 191.

3 I. Kings xvi. 7.

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For some months the Divine Master has completely changed His method of cultivation. Finding, no doubt, that His Little Flower has been sufficiently watered, He allows her to grow up under the warm rays of a brilliant sun. He only smiles upon her now, and it is you, dear Reverend Mother, who mirror His smile to me. The bright sunlight, far from withering her petals fosters their growth in a marvellous way. Deep in her heart she treasures those precious drops of dew—the humiliations of other days—and they remind her always how frail she is. Were all creatures to draw near and pour out their flattery, no hollow satisfaction would mingle with her joyful realisation that in God's eyes she is a poor worthless thing, and nothing more.

When I say that I am indifferent to praise, I do not mean the love and confidence you show me, which really touch my heart, but I feel that I have nothing now to fear from praise, and can listen to it unmoved, attributing to God all that is good in me. If it please Him to make me appear better than I am, that does not concern me, He can act as He will.

My God, by how many different ways dost Thou lead souls! We read of Saints who have left nothing behind them at their death, not the least thing by which they may be remembered, not a single written line; whilst others, like our Holy Mother St. Teresa, have enriched the

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Church with their sublime teachings, not hesitating to reveal "*the secrets of the King*,"¹ that He may be better known and better loved. Which of these two ways is more pleasing to God? It seems to me they are equally agreeable to Him.

All those beloved by God have followed the inspiration of the Holy Ghost who commanded the Prophet to write: "*Tell the just man that all is well*."² Yes, all is well when one seeks only the Master's Will, so I, poor little flower, obey Jesus when I try to please you, who are His representative upon earth.

You know, Mother, that I have always desired to become a Saint, but in comparing myself with the Saints I have ever felt that I am as far removed from them, as a grain of sand trampled underfoot by the passer-by is from the mountain whose summit is lost in the clouds.

Instead of feeling discouraged by such reflections, I concluded that God would not inspire a wish which could not be realised, and that in spite of my littleness I might aim at being a Saint. "It is impossible," I said, "for me to become great, so I must bear with myself and my many imperfections, but I will seek out a means of reaching Heaven by a little way—very short, very straight and entirely new. We live in an age of inventions: there are now lifts which save us the trouble of climbing stairs. I will

¹ Tobias xii. 7.

² Cf. Isaias iii. 10.

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you have done you have doubtless remembered that Our Lord is often pleased to give wisdom to little ones.

On this earth, indeed, it is rare to find souls that do not measure God's Omnipotence by their own narrow thoughts. The world is ever ready to admit of exceptions: to God alone that liberty is denied. I know it has long been the custom to measure experience by age—in his youth the holy King David sang to the Lord: "*I am young and despised,*"¹ but in the same psalm, however, he does not fear to say: "*I have had understanding above old men, because I have sought Thy commandments; Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths; I have sworn and I am determined to keep the judgments of Thy justice.*"² You did not consider it imprudent to assure me one day that the Divine Master was enlightening me and giving me the experience of years. I am now too little to be guilty of vanity, and too little to try to prove my humility by high-sounding words. I prefer, therefore, to own in all simplicity that "*He that is mighty hath done great things to me,*"³ and the greatest of all is that He has shown me my littleness and how of myself I am incapable of anything good.

My soul has known trials of many kinds and I have suffered much here below. In my child-

¹ Ps. cxviii. 141.

² Ps. cxviii. 100, 105, 106.

³ Luke i. 49.

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hood I did so with sadness, while now I find sweetness in all things—even the most bitter. I admit you must know me intimately, dear Mother, not to smile as you read these words, for has ever a soul appeared less tried than mine? But if the martyrdom I have endured for the past twelve months were to become visible, it would cause no little surprise. Since it is your desire that I should describe it I will attempt to do so, but words are inadequate and I shall always fall short of the reality.

Last year during Lent I felt stronger than ever, and in spite of the fast, which I observed in all its rigour, I was perfectly well until Holy Week. But in the early hours of Good Friday—blissful remembrance!—Jesus gave me the hope that I should soon join Him in His beautiful Heaven.

Not having obtained permission to watch at the Altar of Repose throughout Thursday night, I returned to our cell at midnight. Scarcely had I laid my head on the pillow when I felt a hot stream rise to my lips, and thinking I was going to die, my heart almost broke with joy. I had already put out our lamp, so I mortified my curiosity till morning and went peacefully to sleep.

At five o'clock, the time for rising, I remembered immediately that I had some good news to learn, and going to the window I found, as I

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bitterness where these poor sinners take their food and will not rise from it till Thou givest the sign. But may she not say in her own name and in the name of her guilty brethren: "*O God, be merciful to us sinners*" ?¹ Send us away justified. May all those on whom faith does not shine, at last see the light! My God, if that table which they profane must be purified by one who loves Thee, I am willing to remain there alone to eat the bread of tears until the day when it shall please Thee to bring me to Thy Kingdom of light. I ask no other favour beyond that of never offending Thee.

I have already told you, Mother, that from my childhood, I had had the conviction that I should one day be released from this land of darkness. I believed it not only from what I had heard, but also because the deepest and most secret longings of my heart assured me that there was in store for me another and most beautiful country, an abiding dwelling place. I was like Christopher Columbus whose genius anticipated the discovery of the New World. But of a sudden the fog that surrounds me finds its way into my very soul, and so blinds me that I can no longer see there the lovely picture of my promised Home . . . it has all faded away.

When my heart, weary of the enveloping darkness, tries to find some rest and strength in

¹ Cf. Luke xviii. 13.

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the thought of an everlasting life to come, my anguish only increases. It seems to me that the darkness itself, borrowing the voice of the unbeliever, cries mockingly: "You dream of a land of light and fragrance, you believe that the Creator of these wonders will be for ever yours, you think to escape one day from the mists in which you now languish. Hope on! . . . Hope on! . . . look forward to death! It will give you, not what you hope for, but a night darker still, the night of utter nothingness!"

This description of what I suffer, dear Mother, is as far removed from reality as the painter's rough outline from the model he copies, but to write more might be to blaspheme . . . even now I may have said too much. May God forgive me! He knows how I try to live by faith even though it affords me no consolation. I have made more acts of faith during the past year than in all the rest of my life. Whenever my enemy provokes me to combat, I try to behave like a gallant soldier. Aware that a duel is an act of cowardice, I turn my back on the foe without once looking him in the face; then hastening to my Saviour I tell Him that I am ready to shed my blood as a witness to my belief in Heaven. I tell Him that if He will deign to open it for eternity to poor unbelievers, I am content to sacrifice during my life all joyous thoughts of the Home that awaits me.

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And so in spite of this trial which robs me of all sense of enjoyment, I can still say: "*Thou hast given me, O Lord, a delight in Thy doings.*"¹ For is there a greater joy than to suffer for Thy love, O my God? The more intense and more hidden the suffering the more dost Thou value it. And even if by an impossibility Thou shouldst not be aware of my affliction, I should be still happy to bear it, in the hope that by my tears I might prevent or atone for one sin against faith.

You may think that I am exaggerating the night of my soul. If one judged by the poems I have composed this year it might seem that I have been inundated with consolation, that I am a child for whom the veil of Faith is almost rent asunder. . . . But it is not a veil . . . it is a wall which reaches to the very Heavens, shutting out the starry sky.

When I sing in my verses of the happiness of Heaven and of the eternal possession of God, I feel no joy, I sing only of *what I wish to believe*. Sometimes, I confess, a feeble ray of sunshine penetrates my dark night and brings me a moment's relief, but after it has gone, the remembrance of it, instead of consoling me, makes the blackness seem denser still.

And yet I have never experienced more fully the sweetness and mercy of Our Lord. He did

¹ Ps. xcii. 5.

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not send this heavy cross when it would, I believe, have discouraged me, but chose a time when I was able to bear it. Now it does no more than deprive me of all natural satisfaction in my longing for Heaven.

It seems to me, Mother, that nothing stands in the way of my going thither. I have no longer any great desires, beyond that of loving till I die of love. I am free, and I fear nothing, not even what I once dreaded more than anything else, a long illness which would make me a burden to the community. Should it please God I am quite content to have my sufferings of body and soul prolonged for years. I do not shrink from a long life; I do not refuse the combat. The Lord is the rock upon which I stand—“*Who teacheth my hands to fight, and my fingers to war. He is my Protector and I have hoped in Him.*”¹ I have never asked God to let me die young, but I have always thought that this favour will be granted me.

Very often He is satisfied with our wish to labour for His glory, and you know, Mother, how immense are my desires. You know, also, that through my own dearly loved sisters, Jesus has offered me more than one bitter chalice. The holy King David was right when he sang: “*Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.*”² But perfect union can only exist upon earth in the midst of sacrifice.

¹ Ps. cxiii. 1, 2.

² Ps. cxxxii. 1.

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It was not to live with my sisters that I came to this dear Carmel: indeed, I foresaw clearly that the restraining of natural affection would offer scope for great suffering.

How can it be said that it is more perfect to separate ourselves from those who are bound to us by ties of blood? Are brothers to be blamed who fight side by side on the same field of battle, or who together win the martyr's palm? It is true, no doubt, that they encourage one another, but it is also true that the martyrdom of each inflicts a martyrdom on all. And so is it in the religious life, which theologians call a martyrdom. A heart given to God loses nothing of its natural affection; on the contrary, that affection grows stronger by becoming purer and more spiritual. It is with this love, Mother, that I love you and my sisters. I am glad to fight beside you for the glory of the King of Heaven, but I am quite ready to go to another battlefield, should the Divine Commander so will. There would be no need even of an order—a look, a sign would suffice.

Ever since I entered Carmel I have thought that if Our Lord did not take me quickly to Heaven the lot of Noah's dove would be mine, and that one day, opening the window of the ark, He would bid me fly away to heathen lands bearing the olive branch. And this firm hope has helped me to soar above all earthly things.

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Knowing that even in Carmel there must be partings, I have tried by anticipation to make my abode in Heaven. I have accepted exile in the midst of an unknown people, not for myself alone, but, what was far more bitter, for my sisters also. Two were asked for by our own foundation, the Carmel of Saigon, and there was serious question of their being sent. My heart ached at the thought of the trials awaiting them but I would not say a word to hold them back. All that is over now. Superiors brought forward insurmountable obstacles, so that my lips only touched the cup long enough to taste its bitterness.

Let me tell you, Mother, why, if Our Lady cures me, I want to respond to the call from our convent at Hanoi. A very special vocation, it seems, is needed to live in the Carmels abroad, and many who think themselves called are mistaken; but you have told me that I have this particular vocation and that my health alone stands in the way. If, however, I am some day obliged to leave the cradle of my religious life, it will not be without a pang. My heart is naturally sensitive and it is precisely because of its capacity for pain that I wish to offer to Our Lord every kind of suffering it can bear. Here I am loved by you and by all the Sisters, and because this love is so sweet to me, I dream of a convent where I should be unknown, where I should taste the

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bitterness of exile. I know only too well of how little use I am, and it would not be for the sake of the service I might render to the Carmel of Hanoï that I would leave everything dear to me, my sole reason would be to do God's Will and to sacrifice myself for Him at His good pleasure. I should not be disappointed, for when we expect nothing but suffering, the smallest joy comes as a surprise; and when we seek it as a precious treasure, suffering becomes the greatest of all joys.

But I shall not recover from this sickness. My soul, nevertheless, abides in peace, for I have long since ceased to belong to myself. I have surrendered my whole being to my Spouse and He is free to do with me whatsoever He pleases. He awakened in me an attraction for a life of complete exile and asked me if I would consent to drink of that chalice. Without hesitation I tried to grasp it, but He, withdrawing His hand, showed me that my consent was all He desired.

O my God! from how much disquiet do we free ourselves by the vow of obedience! Happy is the simple religious: her one guide being the will of her superiors, she is ever sure of following the right path, and has no fear of being misled, even when it may appear her superiors are mistaken. But should she cease to consult the unerring compass, then at once her soul goes

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astray in barren wastes, where the waters of grace quickly fail.

You, Mother, are the compass which Jesus has provided to direct me safely to the eternal shore. I find it a joy to fix my eyes upon you, and then do the will of my Lord. By permitting me to suffer these temptations against faith, He has greatly increased within me the *spirit of faith*—that spirit which makes me see Him living in your soul, and communicating through you His holy commands. I know well that you make the burden of obedience sweet and light, but deep in my heart I feel that my attitude would remain unchanged, and that my filial affection would not grow less, were you to treat me with severity, because I should still see the will of God manifesting itself in yet another way for the greater good of my soul.

CHAPTER X

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

AMONG the numberless graces I have received this year, not the least is a deeper insight into the precept of charity. I had never before fathomed the words of Our Lord: "*The second commandment is like to the first: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*"¹ I had laboured above all to love God and it was in loving Him that I discovered the hidden meaning of these other words: "*Not every one that saith to me: Lord, Lord! shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of My Father.*"² This will Our Lord revealed to me through the words of His *new Commandment* addressed to His Apostles at the Last Supper, when He told them "*to love one another as He had loved them.*"³ I set myself to find out how He had loved His Apostles, and I saw that it was not for their natural qualities, seeing they were but ignorant men, whose minds dwelt chiefly on earthly things. Yet He calls them His friends, His brethren; He desires to see them near Him in the Kingdom of His Father; and to open this Kingdom to them He

¹ Matt. xxii. 39.

² Cf. Matt. vii. 21.

³ Cf. John xiii. 34.

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wills to die on the Cross, saying: "*Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*"¹

As I meditated on these divine words, I understood how imperfect was the love I bore my Sisters in religion, and that I did not love them as Our Lord does. Now I know that true charity consists in bearing all my neighbour's defects, in not being surprised at mistakes, but edified at the smallest virtues.

Above all else I have learnt that charity must not remain shut up in the heart, for "*No man lighteth a candle and putteth it in a hidden place, nor under a bushel; but upon a candlestick, that they who come in may see the light.*"² This candle, it seems to me, Mother, represents that charity which enlightens and gladdens, not only those who are dearest to us, but likewise *all those who are of the household.*

In the Old Law, when God told His people to love their neighbour as themselves, He had not yet come down upon earth; and knowing full well man's strong love of self, He could not ask anything greater. But when Our Lord gave His Apostles a new Commandment—"His own Commandment"³—He not only required of us to love our neighbour as ourselves, but would have us love even as He does, and as He will do until the end of time.

¹ John xv. 23.

² Luke xi. 33.

³ John xv. 12.

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O my Jesus ! Thou dost never ask what is impossible; Thou knowest better than I how frail and imperfect I am; Thou knowest that I shall never love my Sisters as Thou hast loved them, unless Thou lovest them Thyself within me, my dearest Master. It is because Thou dost desire to grant me this grace, that Thou hast given a new Commandment, and dearly do I cherish it, since it proves to me that it is Thy Will *to love in me* all those Thou dost bid me love.

When I show charity towards others I know that it is Jesus who is acting within me, and the more closely I am united to Him, the more dearly I love my Sisters. Should I wish to increase this love, and should the devil bring before me the defects of a Sister, I hasten to look for her virtues and good motives. I call to mind that though I may have seen her fall once, she may have gained many victories over herself which in her humility she conceals, and also that what appears to be a fault may very well, owing to the good intention that prompted it, be an act of virtue. I have all the less difficulty in persuading myself that this is so, because of my own experience.

One day, during recreation, the portress came to ask for a Sister to help her in some particular task which she mentioned. Now I had the eager desire of a child to do this very thing, and as it happened, the choice fell upon me. I began immediately to fold up our needlework, slowly

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enough, however, to allow my neighbour to fold hers before me, for I knew it would please her to take my place. Noticing how deliberate I was, the portress said laughingly: "Ah! I thought you would not add this pearl to your crown, you were too slow." And all the community were left under the impression that I had acted according to nature.

I cannot tell you what profit I derived from this incident, and how indulgent it has made me towards others. It still keeps in check any feeling of vanity when I receive praise, for I reflect that since my small acts of virtue can be mistaken for imperfections, why should not an imperfection be mistaken for virtue? And I repeat with St. Paul: "*To me it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man's day. But neither do I judge myself. He that judgeth me is the Lord.*"¹ Since, therefore, the Lord is my Judge, I will try always to think leniently of others, that He may judge me leniently—or not at all, since He says: "*Judge not and ye shall not be judged.*"²

Returning to the Holy Gospels where Our Lord explains to me clearly in what His new Commandment consists, I read in St. Matthew: "*You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thy enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you.*"³

¹ I. Cor. iv. 3, 4.

² Luke, vi. 37.

³ Matt. v. 43, 44.

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There are, of course, no enemies in Carmel; but, after all, we have our natural likes and dislikes. We may feel drawn towards one Sister and may be tempted to go a long way round to avoid meeting another. Well, Our Lord tells me that this last is the Sister I must love and pray for, even though her manners might lead me to believe that she does not care for me. "*If you love them that love you, what thanks are to you? For sinners also love those that love them.*"¹ Nor is it enough to love, we must prove our love. We take a natural delight in pleasing friends, but that is not charity; even sinners do the same.

Elsewhere Our Lord teaches me: "*Give to everyone that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods, ask them not again.*"² To give to everyone who asks is less pleasant than to give spontaneously and of one's own accord. Again, if a thing be asked in a courteous way consent is easy, but if, unhappily, tactless words have been used, there is an inward rebellion unless we are perfect in charity. We discover no end of excuses for refusing, and it is only after having made clear to the guilty Sister how rude was her behaviour, that we grant *as a favour* what she requires, or render a slight service which takes perhaps, one-half of the time we have lost in setting forth the difficulties and our own imaginary rights.

¹ Luke, vi. 32.

² Luke, vi. 30.

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If it be difficult to give to anyone who asks, it is still more difficult to let what belongs to us be taken without asking to have it back. I say this is difficult but I should rather say that it seems so, for "*The yoke of the Lord is sweet and His burden light.*"¹ And when we submit to that yoke we at once feel its sweetness.

I said just now that Jesus does not wish me to reclaim what belongs to me. This ought to appear quite natural since in reality I own nothing, and ought to rejoice when an occasion brings home to me the poverty to which I am solemnly vowed. Formerly I used to think myself detached from everything, but since Our Lord's words have become clear, I see how imperfect I am. When starting to paint, for instance, if I happen to find the brushes in confusion, if a ruler or penknife be missing, I am sorely tempted to lose patience, and have strongly to resist the impulse to demand, and sharply demand, the articles required.

I may, of course, ask for them, and if I do so humbly I am not disobeying Our Lord's command. On the contrary, I am like the poor who hold out their hands for the necessities of life and who if refused are not surprised, because no one owes them anything. To soar above all natural sentiment brings the deepest peace, nor is there any joy equal to that which is felt by the

¹ Cf. Matt. xi. 30.

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truly poor in spirit. Should they ask with detachment for something needful, and be not only refused but an attempt be made to deprive them of what they already possess, they follow the Master's advice: "*If any man take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him.*"¹

It seems to me that to give up one's cloak is to renounce every right, and look upon oneself as the servant, the slave of all. Divested of a cloak, however, it is easier to walk or run, so the Master adds: "*And whosoever will force thee one mile, go with him other two.*"² Hence it is not enough for me to give to whoever asks, I ought to anticipate the wish; I should show myself honoured by the request for service, and if anything set apart for my use be taken away I should appear glad to be rid of it.

I cannot always, indeed, carry out to the letter the words of the Gospel, for occasions arise when I am compelled to refuse a request. Yet, when charity has taken deep root in the soul, it shows itself outwardly, and there is always a way of refusing so graciously what one cannot give, that the refusal affords as much pleasure as the gift itself. It is true that people are more ready to beg from those who are most ready to give; still, on the pretext that I shall be forced to refuse, I ought not to avoid an importunate Sister, since the Divine Master has said: "*From*

¹ Matt. v. 40.

² Matt. v. 41.

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him that would borrow of thee turn not away.”¹
Neither should I be kind for the sake of being considered so, nor in the hope that the Sister will return the service, for once again it is written: *“If you lend to them of whom you hope to receive, what thanks are to you? For sinners also lend to sinners for to receive as much. But you do good and lend, hoping for nothing thereby, and your reward shall be great.”²*

Along this path it is but the first step that costs—even on earth the reward will be great. To lend without hope of return may seem hard; one would rather give outright, for a thing once given is no longer ours. When a Sister comes to you and says: “I have our Mother’s leave to borrow your help for a few hours, and you may rest assured that later on I will do as much for you,” we may be practically certain that the time so lent will never be repaid, and therefore feel sorely tempted to say: “I will *give* what you ask!” The remark would gratify self-love, it being more generous to give than to lend, and in addition, it would let the Sister feel how little reliance you put in her promise.

The divine precepts do assuredly run counter to our natural inclinations, and without the help of grace it would be impossible to understand them, far less put them in practice.

I fear, dear Mother, that I have expressed

¹ Matt. v. 42.

² Luke vi. 34, 35.

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myself more confusedly than usual, and I cannot think what you will find to interest you in these rambling pages. However, I am not writing a literary work, and if I have wearied you by this discourse on charity you will at least find in it a proof of your child's good will. I have to confess that I am far from living up to the lights I have received, yet the mere desire of doing so brings me peace. If I happen to stumble in the matter of charity, I rise again immediately, and for some months past I have not even had to struggle. With our Father, St. John of the Cross, I have been able to say: "My house is entirely at peace," and that peace I attribute to a certain victory which I gained over myself. Ever since then, the hosts of Heaven have hastened to my aid, not wishing me to be wounded after my valiant fight on the occasion I am about to describe.

Formerly, a holy nun of our community was a constant source of annoyance to me: the devil must have had something to do with the trial, for undoubtedly it was he who made me see so many disagreeable points in her. Unwilling to yield to my natural antipathy, I remembered that charity ought not merely to exist in the heart but also to show itself in deeds; so I endeavoured to treat this Sister as I should my most cherished friend. Whenever I met her I prayed for her, at the same time offering to God

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her virtues and her merits. I knew this would delight Our Lord exceedingly, for there is no artist who is not gratified when his works are praised, and the Divine Artist of souls is therefore well pleased when we do not stop at the exterior, but penetrate to the inner sanctuary. He has chosen for His abode and admire its beauty.

I did not rest satisfied with praying earnestly for the Sister who gave me such occasions for self-mastery, but I tried also to render her as many services as I could; and when tempted to make a disagreeable answer, I made haste to smile and change the subject of conversation. The *Imitation* says: "It is more profitable to leave to everyone his way of thinking than to give way to contentious discourses;"¹ and sometimes when the temptation was particularly violent, if I could slip away without her suspecting my inward struggle, I would run like a deserter from the battlefield. The outcome of all this was that she said to me one day, with a beaming countenance: "Tell me, Sœur Thérèse, what it is that attracts you to me so strongly? I never meet you without being welcomed with your most gracious smile?" Ah! what attracted me was Jesus hidden in the depths of her soul, Jesus who makes sweet even that which is most bitter.

I spoke just now, Mother, of my last resource for escaping defeat, namely . . . flight. It was

¹ *Imit.* III. xliv. 1.

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scarcely an honourable method, I confess, but whenever I had recourse to it during my novitiate, it was always successful. Here is a striking example which I think will amuse you.

For several days you had been ill with bronchitis and we were all very anxious. One morning in discharge of my office of sacristan I entered your infirmary, very gently, to put back the keys of the Communion grating. Though I took care not to show it, I was inwardly rejoicing at the opportunity of seeing you. One of the Sisters, however, feared I should wake you, and discreetly wished to take the keys from me. I told her, with all possible politeness, that I was as anxious as she that there should be no noise, adding that it was my duty to return them. I see now it would have been more perfect to yield, but I did not think so then and consequently tried to enter the room.

What she feared came to pass—the noise we made awoke you, and the blame was cast upon me. The Sister made a lengthy discourse, the point of which was that I was the guilty person. I was burning to defend myself when happily it occurred to me that if I began to do so, I should certainly lose my peace of mind, and that as I had not sufficient virtue to keep silence when accused, my only chance of safety lay in flight. No sooner thought than done, and I fled . . . But my heart beat so violently, that I

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could not go far and had to sit down on the stairs to taste in peace and quiet the fruits of my victory. This is without doubt an odd kind of courage, yet I think it better not to expose oneself in the face of certain defeat.

When I think over my novitiate days I see clearly how far removed I was from perfection; some things there are that make me laugh. How good God has been to have trained my soul and lent it wings! All the nets of the hunter can no longer frighten me, for "*A net is set in vain before the eyes of them that have wings.*"¹

It may be that at some future day my present state will appear to me full of defects, but nothing now surprises me. Nor does my utter helplessness distress me; I even glory in it, and expect each day to reveal some fresh imperfection. Indeed these lights on my own nothingness do me more good than lights on matters of faith. Remembering that "*Charity covereth a multitude of sins,*"² I draw from the rich mine which Our Saviour has opened up to us in the Gospels; I search the depths of His adorable words, and I cry out with the Psalmist: "*I have run in the way of Thy commandments since Thou hast enlarged my heart.*"³ And charity alone can widen my heart. O Jesus! ever since its sweet flame consumes me, I run with delight in the way of Thy *new Commandment*, and I desire so to run, until that

¹ Prov. i. 17.

² Prov. x. 12.

³ Ps. cxviii. 32.

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glorious day when with Thy retinue of virgins I shall follow Thee through Thy boundless realm, singing Thy new canticle—the Canticle of Love.

God in His infinite goodness has given me, dear Mother, a clear insight into the deep mysteries of Charity. If only I could express what I know, you would hear a heavenly music; but alas! I can only stammer like a child, and if the words of Jesus were not my support, I should be tempted to beg leave to hold my peace.

When the Divine Master tells me to give to anyone who asks of me and to allow what is mine to be taken without asking it back, it seems to me that He speaks not only of the things of earth but also of the goods of Heaven. Neither the one nor the other are really mine; I renounced the first by the vow of poverty and the others are gifts which are simply lent. If God withdraw them, I have no right to complain. But our own ideas, the fruit of our own mind and heart, we regard as a sacred and personal treasury upon which none may lay hands. For instance, if I communicate to a Sister some light given me in prayer and she afterwards reveals it as though it were her own, it would seem she is appropriating what is mine. Or if during recreation someone makes a witty remark, which her neighbour repeats to the community without

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acknowledging whence it came, its originator will look on this as a sort of theft. At the time, she preserves an unwilling silence, but on the first opportunity she will insinuate delicately that her thoughts have been borrowed.

Had I not experienced all these human weaknesses, Mother, I could not so well explain them. I should have preferred to believe myself the only one who endured such petty temptations, had you not bidden me to hear the novices' difficulties and give them suitable advice. In the discharge of this duty I have learnt much, and above all I have found myself forced to practise what I preached. I can say with all truth that now, by God's grace, I am no more attached to the gifts of the intellect than I am to material things. Should any thought of mine please my Sisters, I find it quite easy to let them regard it as their own. It belongs to the Holy Ghost, not to me, for St. Paul assures us that "*without the Spirit of Love we cannot call God our Father,*"¹ and is not the same Holy Spirit free to use me as a channel to convey a good thought to a soul, without my daring to look on that thought as my private property?

Besides, while I am far from depreciating beautiful thoughts which bring us nearer to God, I have long been of opinion that we must guard against over-estimating their worth. Even the

¹ Cf. Rom. viii. 15.

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highest inspirations are of no value without good works. Others may derive profit from these lights, provided they be duly grateful to Our Lord for allowing them to share in the abundance of one of His more privileged souls; but should that privileged soul take pride in her spiritual wealth and imitate the Pharisee, she becomes like a person dying of starvation before a well-spread table, while his guests enjoy the richest fare, and cast envious glances, perhaps, at the possessor of so many treasures.

How true it is that God alone can sound the heart! How short-sighted are His creatures! When they find a soul whose lights surpass their own, they conclude that the Divine Master loves them less. Yet when did He lose the right to make use of one of His children to provide others with the nourishment they need? That right was not lost in the days of Pharaoh, for God said unto him: "*And therefore have I raised thee, that I may show My power in thee, and My name may be spoken of throughout all the earth.*"¹ Centuries have passed since these words were spoken by the Most High, but His ways have remained unchanged—He has ever chosen human agents to accomplish His work among souls.

¹ Exod. ix. 16.

CHAPTER XI

THE NOVICE MISTRESS

WERE it given to an artist's canvas to think and speak, certainly it would never complain of being touched and re-touched by the brush; and knowing all its beauty to be due to the artist, it would not even feel envious of the brush. Nor could the brush boast of the masterpiece it had helped to produce, for it would understand that true artists are never at a loss, but play with difficulties and to amuse themselves, often make use of the most unlikely and the most defective instruments.

I am the brush Our Lord has chosen to paint His likeness in the souls you have confided to my care. But an artist must have at least two brushes: the first, which is the more useful, gives the ground tints and rapidly covers the whole canvas; the other, a smaller one, is employed for the details of the picture. You, my dear Mother, represent the valuable brush Our Lord holds lovingly in His hand when He wishes to do some great work in the souls of His children; and I am the little one He deigns to use afterwards to fill in the minor details.

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It was about the 8th of December, 1892, that the Divine Artist first took up His little brush, and I shall always remember those days as a time of special grace.

When I entered Carmel, I found in the novitiate a companion who was about eight years my senior. In spite of this difference of age we became the closest friends, and to encourage an affection which gave promise of fostering virtue, we were allowed to converse together on spiritual subjects. My fellow-novice charmed me by her innocence, as well as by her frank and open disposition; on the other hand I was surprised to find how her love for you differed from mine, and in various ways her behaviour was a subject of regret. But God had already made me understand that there are souls for whom in His Mercy He waits unweariedly, giving them His light little by little, and I was determined not to forestall Him.

One day, while thinking over the permission we had received to converse together so that we might—as our holy Rule tells us—“incite one another to a more ardent love of our Divine Spouse,” it came home to me with sorrow that our conversations did not attain the desired end; and I saw clearly that I must either speak out fearlessly, or put an end altogether to what resembled mere worldly talk. I begged Our Lord to inspire me with words at once kind and

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convincing, or better still to speak Himself in my stead. He heard my prayer, for "*those who look upon Him shall be enlightened*,"¹ and "*to the upright a light is risen in the darkness*."² The first of the texts I apply to myself, and the other to my companion who was truly upright of heart.

At our next meeting the poor little Sister saw well from the outset that my manner had changed, and blushing deeply she sat down beside me. I told her tenderly what was in my mind; then pointing out what true love really is, I proved to her that in loving Mother Prioress with such a natural affection, she was in truth simply loving herself. I confided to her the sacrifices of this kind I had been obliged to make at the beginning of my religious life, and before long her tears were mingled with my own. She humbly acknowledged herself in the wrong and admitted that what I had said was quite true; then, begging as a favour that I would always point out her faults, she promised to begin a new life. From that day our love for one another became wholly spiritual and in us were fulfilled the words of the Holy Ghost: "*A brother that is helped by his brother is like a strong city*."³

You know well, Mother, that I had no intention of turning away my companion from you. My aim was to explain to her that true love feeds

¹ Cf. Ps. xxxiii. 6.

² Ps. cxi. 4.

³ Prov. xviii. 19.

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on sacrifice, and that in proportion as our souls renounce natural satisfaction our affections become stronger and more unselfish.

I remember when I was a postulant there were times when I was so violently tempted to seek my own satisfaction, some crumbs of pleasure, by having a word with you, that I was obliged to hurry past your cell and cling to the banisters to keep myself from turning back. Many were the permissions I wanted to ask, pretexts for yielding to my natural affection suggested themselves in hundreds. How glad I am that from the beginning I learned to practise self-denial! Already I enjoy the reward promised to those who fight bravely, and I no longer feel the need of refusing all consolation to my heart, for my heart is set on God. Because it has loved only Him, it has grown, little by little, till it can give to those who are dear to Him a far deeper love than if it were centred in a barren and selfish affection.

I have told you of the first piece of work which Our Lord deigned to accomplish, together with you, by means of His little brush, but that was merely a prelude to the masterpiece you entrusted to it later.

From the moment I entered the sanctuary of souls, I saw at a glance that the task was beyond my strength, and quickly taking refuge in Our Lord's arms, I imitated those babes who when

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frightened hide their faces on their father's shoulder: "Thou seest, Lord," I cried, "that I am too small to feed Thy little ones, but if through me Thou wilt give to each what is suitable, then fill my hands, and without quitting the shelter of Thy arms, or even turning my head, I will distribute Thy treasures to the souls who come to me asking for food. When they find it to their liking I shall know that it is not to me they owe it, but to Thee; while if on the contrary they complain, finding fault with its bitterness, I shall not be at all disturbed, but shall try to persuade them it comes from Thee, and will take care to give them none other."

The knowledge that it was impossible to do anything of myself greatly simplified my task, and confident that the rest would be given me over and above, the one aim of my interior life was to unite myself more and more closely with God. Nor has my hope been ever deceived: each time I have needed sustenance for the souls under my charge I have always found my hands filled. Had I acted otherwise, and relied upon my own strength, I should very soon have been forced to surrender.

In the abstract it seems easy to do good to souls, to make them love God more, and to mould them to one's own ideas. But, when we put our hands to the work, we quickly learn that without God's help it is as impossible to do good to them,

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as to bring back the sun when once it has set. Our own tastes, our own ideas must be put aside, and in absolute forgetfulness of self we must guide souls, not by our way, but along that particular path which Our Lord Himself indicates. The chief difficulty, however, does not lie even here—what costs more than all else is to be compelled to note their faults, their slightest imperfections, and to wage a deadly war against them.

I was going to say: unhappily for me, but that would be cowardly, so I will say: happily for my novices, ever since I placed myself in the arms of Jesus I have been like a watchman on the look-out for the enemy from the highest turret of a fortified castle. Nothing escapes me; indeed my clear-sightedness often gives me matter for surprise, and makes me think it quite excusable in the prophet Jonas to have fled before the face of the Lord rather than announce the ruin of Ninive. I would prefer to receive a thousand reproofs rather than inflict one, yet I feel it necessary that the task should cause me pain, for if I spoke through natural impulse only, the soul in fault would not understand she was in the wrong and would simply think: "The Sister in charge of me is annoyed about something and vents her displeasure upon me, although I am full of the best intentions."

But in this, as in all else, I must practise sacrifice and self-denial. When I write a letter I

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feel it will produce no fruit unless it cost an effort and the effort be made only out of obedience. So, too, when I am talking with a novice I am ever on the watch to mortify myself, avoiding all questions which would tend to gratify my curiosity. Should she begin to speak on an interesting subject, and leaving it unfinished pass on to another that wearies me, I am careful not to remind her of the digression, for no good can come of self-seeking.

Your little lambs find me severe, I know, Mother, and if they were to read these lines they would say that, so far as they can see, it does not in the least distress me to run after them, and to point out how they have soiled or torn their beautiful white fleece. But whatever they may say, they know in their hearts that I love them with a very great love, and they need have no fear of my imitating "*the hireling . . . who seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and flieth.*"¹ I am ready to lay down my life for my novices, though my affection is so disinterested that I would not have them know it. By God's help, I have never tried to draw their hearts to myself. I have always known that my mission was to lead them to Him, and to you, Mother, who on earth hold His place in their regard, and whom, therefore, they must love and respect.

I have already told you how much knowledge

¹ John x. 12.

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I gained through guiding others. From the beginning I realised that all souls have more or less the same battles to fight, but on the other hand I saw that since no two souls are exactly alike, each one must be dealt with differently. With some I have to humble myself and not to shrink from confessing my own struggles and defeats; by this means they have less difficulty in acknowledging their faults, being consoled by the discovery that I know of their trials from my own experience. In dealing with others, my only hope of success lies in being firm and in never going back on what I have said, since self-abasement would be mistaken for weakness.

Our Lord has given me the grace never to fear the conflict, to do my duty no matter what the cost. More than once it has been said to me: "If you want to do anything with me, you must treat me with gentleness, you will gain nothing by being severe." But no one is a good judge in his own case. During a painful operation a child would be sure to cry out and say that the remedy is worse than the disease, yet how great would be the little one's delight if at the end of a few days he should find himself cured and able to run about and play. The same thing happens with souls: they soon recognise and confess that a little bitterness is preferable to a surfeit of sweetness.

The change which takes place in a soul from

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one day to another is sometimes really marvelous. "You did well to be severe yesterday," a novice said to me, "at first I was indignant, but after I had thought it over I saw you were right. I left your cell thinking all was at an end between us and determined to have nothing more to do with you. I knew, however, that the suggestion came from Satan and I felt you were praying for me. Then, as I grew calm, the light began to shine and now I have come back to hear all you have to say."

Only too happy to follow the dictates of my heart I hastened to serve some food less bitter to the taste. But I soon discovered that I must not go too far, lest a single word should bring to the ground the edifice that had cost so many tears. If I let fall the slightest remark that might seem to soften the hard truths of the previous day, I noticed my little Sister trying to take advantage of the opening thus afforded. Then I had recourse to prayer, I turned to Our Blessed Lady, and Jesus was victorious. My whole strength lies in prayer and sacrifice: these are my invincible weapons, and experience has taught me that the heart is won by them rather than by words.

Two years ago, during Lent, a novice said to me, her face radiant: "You would never guess what I dreamt last night, I thought I was with my sister who is deeply attached to the world,

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and wishing to withdraw her from its vanities I explained to her these words of your hymn:

Their loss is gain who all forsake
To find Thy Love, O Jesu mine!
For Thee my ointment-jar I break,
The perfume of my life is 'Thine.

I felt that what I said sank deep into her heart and I was overjoyed. This morning it seems to me that perhaps Our Lord wants me to give Him this soul. Would you approve of my writing to her at Easter telling her of my dream and that Jesus desires to have her for His spouse?" I answered that she might certainly ask the permission.

As Lent was not nearly over you were surprised, Mother, at such a premature request, and clearly inspired by God you replied that Carmelites should save souls rather by prayer than by letters. On hearing of your decision I said to my little Sister: "Let us set to work and pray very hard: what a joy it will be if our prayers are answered by the end of Lent!" O infinite mercy of Our Lord! At the close of Lent one more soul had consecrated herself to God by nothing less than a miracle of grace, wrought through the fervour of a humble novice.

The power of prayer is indeed wonderful. It is like a queen, who having free access always to the king can obtain whatsoever she asks. To

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secure a hearing there is no need to recite set prayers composed for the occasion—were this the case I should indeed deserve to be pitied!

Apart from the Divine Office, which in spite of my unworthiness is a daily joy, I have not the courage to search through books for beautiful prayers; they are so numerous, that it would only make my head ache, and besides, each one is more lovely than the other. Unable either to say them all or to choose between them, I do as a child would who cannot read—I say just what I want to say to God, quite simply, and He never fails to understand.

For me, prayer is an uplifting of the heart, a glance towards Heaven, a cry of gratitude and of love in times of sorrow as well as of joy. It is something noble, something supernatural, which expands the soul and unites it to God. When my state of spiritual aridity is such that not a single good thought will come, I repeat very slowly the “Our Father” and the “Hail Mary,” which suffice to console me, and provide divine food for my soul.

But where am I? Once more I am lost in a maze of reflections. Forgive me, Mother, for wandering in this way. I admit that my story is like a tangled skein, but it is the best I can do. My heart is like a lake into which I cast my nets at random. I write down my thoughts as they occur.

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I was talking about the novices. They often say to me: "You have an answer for everything; we really thought we should puzzle you this time. Where do you find all you teach us?" Some are even simple enough to think I can read their souls because I have happened to make known to them—without revelation—the subject of their thoughts.

On one occasion the senior novice had determined to hide from me a great sorrow which was causing her much pain. She had spent a miserable night, but had kept back the tears lest her eyes should betray her. When she came to me her face was bright and she spoke in a cheerful tone. I said to her simply: "I am sure you are in trouble." She looked at me with amazement, and her surprise was so great that it reacted on me, conveying an impression of the supernatural. I felt that God was there close to us, and that unwittingly—for I have not the gift of reading souls—I had spoken as one inspired. After that I was able to console her completely.

And now, dear Mother, I will tell you of my greatest spiritual gain in dealing with the novices. You know they are under no restriction and are therefore allowed to say anything they like to me. This is easy since they do not owe me the respect due to a Novice Mistress. I cannot say that Our Lord makes me walk in the way

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of exterior humiliation; He is content with humbling me in my inmost soul. In the eyes of creatures, success crowns all my efforts, and—if the words may be used of life in the cloister—I walk in the dangerous path of honour. In this respect I understand the design of God and of Superiors. If I were looked upon by my Sisters as a useless member of the community, incapable and wanting in judgment, you could not employ me to help you, and therefore the Divine Master has thrown a veil over my shortcomings, interior and exterior. Many compliments come to me from the novices in consequence. The compliments are sincere for I know they mean what they say but, the remembrance of my weakness is so constantly present to me, that there is no room for vanity. My soul, however, tired at times of this over-sweet food and longs for something other than praise. Our Lord then serves me with a salad well-flavoured and mixed with plenty of vinegar, the oil alone being wanting, which makes it still more to my taste. At the moment when I least expect it, this salad is set before me by my novices. Lifting the veil that hides my faults, God allows them to see me as I really am and they do not find me altogether to their liking. With a simplicity that is delightful they tell me how I try them and what they dislike in me; in fact they are as frank as though it were a question of someone

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else, for they know that it pleases me greatly when they are so outspoken. This delicious banquet does more than please me, it fills my soul with joy. How can anything so contrary to nature afford such extraordinary pleasure? Had I not experienced it I could not have believed it possible.

Once when I had an intense longing for some humiliation, a young postulant gratified my desire so completely that I was reminded of the occasion when Semei cursed David, and with the holy king I repeated the words: "*Yea, it is the Lord who hath bidden him say all these things.*"¹ This is how God takes care of me: unable to provide me always with the strength-giving bread of exterior humiliation, He allows me from time to time to eat of "*the crumbs from the table of the children.*"² How magnificent are His mercies!

Since that infinite mercy is the subject of the song I am trying to sing on earth, dear Mother, I ought also to speak here of another real advantage which I reaped in the discharge of my little task. Formerly when I saw a Sister doing something I did not like, and seemingly contrary to our Rule, I used to think how glad I should be if I could only warn her and point out her mistake. But since this burden has been laid upon me and it has become my duty to find fault, my ideas have

¹ Cf. 2 Kings xvi. 10.

² Mark vii. 28.

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undergone a change. Now, when I chance to see something wrong I heave a sigh of relief. I thank God the guilty one is not a novice and that it is not my business to correct her ; then I do all I can to find excuses, and to credit her with the good intentions she no doubt possesses.

Your devotedness throughout my illness, dear reverend Mother, has also taught me many a lesson of charity. No remedy seems too costly, and should one fail, you try something else. When I am present at recreation what precautions you take to protect me from the slightest draught ! All this makes me feel that I ought to be as compassionate for the spiritual infirmities of my Sisters as you are, Mother, for my bodily ills.

I have noticed that it is the holiest nuns who are most loved ; everyone seeks their company and is on the watch to do them a service without waiting to be asked. Virtuous souls who can bear to be treated with a want of respect and attention, find themselves surrounded by an atmosphere of love. It is with great truth that our Father, St. John of the Cross, says : " All good things have come to me since I no longer seek them for myself."

Imperfect souls, on the contrary, are left alone. They receive, of course, the measure of politeness which the religious life demands ; but their company is avoided lest a word might be said which would hurt their feelings. When

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I say imperfect souls, I do not mean souls with spiritual imperfections only, for the holiest will not reach perfection, till they are in Heaven. I mean those who being supersensitive or wanting in tact and refinement, make life unpleasant for others. Defects of this kind are, I know, incurable, but I know too how patient you would be in nursing and striving to relieve me, even were my illness to last for years.

From all this I conclude that I ought to seek the companionship of those Sisters for whom I feel a natural aversion, and try to be their good Samaritan. It frequently needs only a word or a smile to impart fresh life to a despondent soul. Yet it is not merely in the hope of bringing consolation that I wish to be kind; if it were, I should soon be discouraged, for often well-intentioned words are totally misunderstood. Consequently, in order that I may lose neither time nor labour, I try to act solely to please Our Lord by following this precept of the Gospel: "*When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends nor thy brethren lest perhaps they also invite thee again and a recompense be made to thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the blind, and the lame, and thou shalt be blessed, because they have naught wherewith to make thee recompense, and thy Father Who seeth in secret will repay thee.*"¹

What can I offer to my Sisters but the

¹ Cf. Luke. xiv. 12, 13, 14.

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spiritual feast of sweet and joyful charity? I know of no other and I wish to imitate St. Paul who rejoiced with those who rejoiced. It is true he also wept with those who wept, and at the feast which I desire to provide, tears must sometimes fall, but I shall always do my best to change them into smiles, for "*God loveth the cheerful giver.*"¹ I remember an act of charity with which God inspired me while I was a novice, and though seemingly small, it has been rewarded already in this life by Our Heavenly Father "*Who seeth in secret.*"

Before Sister St. Peter became quite helpless someone had to leave the evening meditation at ten minutes to six and take her to the refectory. Aware of the difficulty, or rather the impossibility of pleasing the poor invalid, it cost me a great effort to offer my services. I was unwilling, however, to lose such a golden opportunity, remembering Our Lord's own words: "*As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me.*"²

I therefore humbly offered my help, which was accepted, though only after considerable persuasion. Every evening, when I saw her shake her sand-glass,³ I knew it was the signal to start.

Summoning up all my courage I rose, and quite a ceremony commenced. First her stool had to be moved and carried in a particular way,

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 7.

² Matt. xxv. 40.

³ In a spirit of poverty, sand-glasses—instead of watches—are used by the Carmelites to measure the time. [Ed.]

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without the least hurry, and then began the journey. Supporting the poor old Sister by her girdle I tried to acquit myself of the task as gently as I could; if by some mischance she stumbled, I was told I was going too fast and that she would certainly fall, when I tried to lead her more slowly she would say: "Where are you?... I don't feel your hand... You are letting go your hold... I am going to fall!... I was right when I said you were too young to take care of me."

At last we reached the refectory without further mishap, but there fresh difficulties awaited me. Taking every care not to hurt the poor invalid, I had to install her, with some manœuvring, in her place; that done, I had to turn back her sleeves—always according to her own special rubric—and then I was free to go. Noticing, however, that it was with extreme difficulty she cut her bread, I would not leave her till I had rendered this last little service. As she had never expressed any wish that I should do so, the unexpected kindness touched her greatly. Through it—as I learnt later—and still more by bestowing on her my "sweetest smile" at the end of my task, I won her entire confidence.

A long time has elapsed since all this happened, but Our Lord allows the memory of it to linger with me like a perfume from Heaven. One cold winter's evening when I was humbly lead-



"The Little Weaver of Elm."

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ing Sister St. Peter, there suddenly fell on my ears the harmonious strains of distant music. A picture rose before me of a richly-furnished room, brilliantly lighted and decorated, and full of elegantly dressed young girls conversing together as is the way of the world. Then I turned to the poor invalid; instead of sweet music I heard her complaints, instead of rich gilding I saw the bare brick walls of our cloister, scarcely visible in the dim flickering light.

The contrast thrilled me, and Our Lord so illumined my soul with the rays of His truth, in the light of which the pleasures of the world are but darkness, that not for a thousand years of such worldly delights would I have bartered the ten minutes spent in my act of charity. And if now, in days of pain and amid the smoke of battle, the thought that God has withdrawn us from the world is so entrancing, what will it be when in eternal glory and everlasting repose we realise the favour He has done us here, by singling us out to dwell in His house, which is the very portal of Heaven?

These transports of joy have not always accompanied my acts of charity, but from the beginning of my religious life Our Lord would have me understand how sweet it is to see Himself in the heart of His spouses, and therefore when I acted as guide to Sister St. Peter, it was with such love, that I could not have taken

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more care had I been leading Our Divine Lord Himself. But to prove, dear Mother, what I have just said about my difficulties in the past with regard to charity, I shall relate to you a few of my many struggles.

For a long time my place at meditation was near a Sister who fidgeted incessantly, either with her rosary or with something else. Possibly I alone heard her because of my very sensitive ear, but I cannot tell you to what an extent I was tried by the irritating noise. There was a strong temptation to turn round and with one glance to silence the offender; yet in my heart I knew I ought to bear with her patiently, for the love of God first of all, and also to avoid causing her pain. I therefore remained quiet, but the effort cost me so much that sometimes I was bathed in perspiration, and my meditation consisted merely in the prayer of suffering. Finally I sought a way of gaining peace, in my inmost heart at least, and so I tried to find pleasure in the disagreeable noise. Instead of vainly attempting not to hear it, I set myself to listen attentively as though it were delightful music, and my meditation—which was not the prayer of “quiet”—was passed in offering this music to Our Lord.¹

¹ See *The Interior Castle of the Soul*, by St. Teresa, where she shows how the Holy Ghost leads a soul from the simplest form of mental prayer through alternate stages of spiritual sweetness and desolation (the purgative way), to the prayer of “quiet,” or recollection (the illuminative way), and finally to the sublime prayer of “union” in its lower and higher form (the unitive way). [Ed.]

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On another occasion when I was engaged in the laundry, the Sister opposite to me, who was washing handkerchiefs, kept splashing me continually with dirty water. My first impulse was to draw back and wipe my face in order to show her that I wanted her to be more careful. The next moment, however, I saw the folly of refusing treasures thus generously offered, and I carefully refrained from betraying any annoyance. On the contrary I made such efforts to welcome the shower of dirty water that at the end of half an hour I had taken quite a fancy to the novel kind of aspersion, and resolved to return as often as possible to the place where such precious treasures were freely bestowed.

You see, Mother, that I am but a *very little* soul, who can offer to God only *very little* things. It still happens that I frequently miss the opportunity of welcoming these small sacrifices which bring so much peace; but I am not discouraged—I bear the loss of a little peace and I try to be more watchful in the future.

How happy Our Lord makes me, how sweet and easy is His service in this life! He has always given me what I desired, or rather He has made me desire what He wishes to give. A short time before the terrible temptation against faith, I had been thinking how free I was from great outward trials, and that if interior suffering was to be my lot, God must alter my

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spiritual path, a change which did not seem to me likely. Yet I felt I could not go on always living in peace and quiet, and I wondered how God would act.

The answer was not long in coming and it showed me that He whom I love is never at a loss, for without altering my path He sent me this great trial, which soon mingled a salutary bitterness with all the joy.

CHAPTER XII

THE APOSTLE OF PRAYER

IT is not only when He is about to send some trial that Our Lord gives me warning and awakens my desires. For years I had felt a longing to have a brother a priest, though I knew my wish could not be realised. I used often to think that if my little brothers had not been taken to Heaven I should have had the happiness of seeing them at the altar, and I greatly regretted being deprived of such a joy. Yet God went far beyond my dream. I had only longed for one brother who would remember me each day at the altar, and He has united me in the bonds of spiritual friendship with two of His apostles. I should like to tell you, dear Mother, how Our Divine Master granted me this favour.

In 1895, our Holy Mother, St. Teresa, sent my first brother as a gift for my feast. It was washing day and I was busy at my work when Mother Agnes of Jesus, then Mother Prioress, called me aside and read to me a letter from a young seminarist, in which he said he had been inspired by St. Teresa to ask for a Sister who would devote herself specially to his salvation,

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together with that of the souls one day to be entrusted to him. He promised that when he was ordained he would always remember in the Holy Sacrifice the one who should become his sister in Christ. And thus it was that I was chosen to have this future missionary for my brother. I cannot tell you, Mother, how happy I felt. Such an unlooked-for fulfilment of my desires awoke in my heart what I can only describe as the joy of a child, and it carried me back to those early days when pleasures were so keen that my heart seemed too small to contain them. Years had passed since I had tasted such happiness. It was as if some forgotten chords had been stirred within me.

Conscious of my new obligations I set to work to discharge them and strove to redouble my fervour. Now and again I wrote to my new brother. Beyond all doubt it is by prayer and sacrifice we can best help our missionaries, but sometimes, when Our Lord is pleased to unite two souls for His glory, He permits them to exchange their thoughts and so rouse one another to a greater love for God.

Such a correspondence must of course depend entirely on the express desire of those in authority, otherwise it seems to me it would do more harm than good—if not to the missionary, at least to the Carmelite, whose life is so largely one of thought. For a correspondence carried

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on at her own request, even at distant intervals, instead of uniting her to God would occupy her mind uselessly and perhaps lead her to believe that she was doing wonders, when in reality, under cover of zeal, she was simply procuring herself a needless distraction.

But here am I, dear Mother, launched, not upon a distraction but upon a dissertation equally superfluous. . . I shall never correct myself of these lengthy digressions which you must find most wearisome. Forgive me then, even if I begin again at the very next opportunity.

Last year, at the end of May, it was your turn to give me my second brother, and when I represented that, having given all my slender merits to one future apostle, I feared they could not be given to another, you told me that obedience would double their value. In the depth of my heart I had felt certain of this, and moreover, since the zeal of a Carmelite ought to embrace the whole world, I hope with God's help to be of use to more than two missionaries. I pray for all, without forgetting our priests at home, whose ministry is often as full of difficulties as that of the missionary preaching to the heathen . . . Like our Holy Mother, St. Teresa, I wish to be a true daughter of the Church, and to make prayer for all the intentions of Christ's Vicar the one great aim of my life.

But just as I should have taken a special

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interest in the work of my own dear brothers had they lived, without neglecting on that account the general interests of the Church, so now I unite myself in a special manner to the new brothers whom Jesus has given me. To each of them belongs all I possess, for God is too good, too generous to divide my offering; He is so rich that He gives without measure all I ask, even though I do not lose myself in lengthy enumerations.

Since I have two brothers, as well as my little Sisters the novices, the days would be too short to ask in detail for the needs of each soul and I am afraid I might forget something important. Complicated methods are not for simple souls, and as I am one of these, Our Lord Himself has inspired me with a very simple way of fulfilling my obligations.

One day, after Holy Communion, He made me understand these words of Solomon: "*Draw me: we will run after Thee to the odour of Thy ointments.*"¹ O my Jesus, there is no need then to say: In drawing me, draw also the souls that I love. The words: "*Draw me*" suffice. When a soul has been captivated by the odour of Thy perfumes she cannot run alone; as a natural consequence of her attraction towards Thee, all those whom she loves are drawn in her train.

As a torrent bears down to the depths of the

¹ Cant. i. 3.

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sea whatsoever it meets on its way, so likewise, my Jesus, does the soul that plunges into the boundless ocean of Thy Love bring with it all its treasures! My treasures, as Thou well knowest, are the souls it has pleased Thee to unite with mine, and which Thou Thyself hast confided to me. I dare, therefore, to borrow Thy own words, Thy prayer on the last night that saw Thee still a traveller on this earth.

O my Beloved! I know not when my exile will end . . . for many a night I may yet sing Thy mercies here below, but for me, too, will come the last night of all . . . and then I wish to be able to say:

"I have glorified Thee upon earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. I have manifested Thy Name to the men whom Thou hast given me out of the world. Thine they were, and to me thou gavest them; and they have kept Thy Word. Now they have known that all things which Thou hast given me are from Thee: because the words which Thou gavest me I have given to them; and they have received them, and have known for certain that I came forth from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given me, because they are Thine. And all mine are Thine, and Thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we also are one. And now I come to Thee, and these things I speak in

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*the world, that they may have my joy filled in themselves. I do not ask that Thou take them away out of the world, but that Thou preserve them from evil. They are not of the world, as I am not of the world. And not for them only do I pray, but for those also who through their word shall believe in me. Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given me may be with me, that they may see my glory which Thou hast given me, because Thou hast loved me before the foundation of the world. And I have made known Thy Name unto them, and will make it known, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them."*¹

Thus, dear Lord, would I repeat Thy words before losing myself in Thy loving embrace. Perhaps I am very daring . . . and yet for a long time hast Thou not allowed me to be daring with Thee? Thou hast said to me as the Father of the Prodigal to his elder son: "*All I have is thine.*"² And therefore I may use Thy own divine words to draw down favours from Our Heavenly Father upon all the souls under my care.

My God, Thou knowest I have ever desired to love Thee alone. I seek no other glory. Thy love has gone before me from the days of my childhood. It has grown with my growth, and now it is an abyss the depth of which I cannot sound.

Love attracts love, and mine, as it darts

¹ Cf. John xvii.

² Luke xv. 31.

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towards Thee, would fain fill to the brim the Abyss that draws it, but alas ! my love is not even a drop in that Ocean. To love Thee as Thou lovest me, I must borrow Thy own love—thus only can my desire be satisfied. O my Jesus, it seems to me that Thou couldst not have overwhelmed a soul with more love than Thou hast poured out on mine, and that is why I dare ask of Thee to love those Thou hast given me, even as Thou lovest me.

And if in Heaven I find Thou lovest them more than Thou lovest me, I shall rejoice, for I acknowledge that their deserts are greater than mine; but here on earth I can conceive no love comparable to that with which Thou hast favoured me, without any merit of my own.

What I have just written, Mother, amazes me. I had no intention of saying such things. When I repeated this passage from the Holy Gospel: "*The words which Thou gavest me I have given unto them,*" I was not thinking of my brothers but only of my little Sisters in the Novitiate, for I do not consider myself capable of teaching missionaries. The words I wrote for them were those others from the prayer of Our Lord: "*I do not ask that Thou shouldst take them out of the world . . . I pray also for them who through their word shall believe in Thee.*" How indeed could I overlook the souls they are to win by their sufferings and exhortations.

A Little White Flower

But I have not fully explained my thoughts on those words of the Canticle of Canticles: "*Draw me—we will run!*" Our Lord has said: "*No man can come to me except the Father Who has sent Me draw him!*"¹ and further on He tells us: "*Everyone that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.*"² Again He adds: "*If you ask the Father anything in My Name He will give it you.*"³ No doubt it was for this reason that, long before the birth of Our Lord, the Holy Spirit dictated these prophetic words: "*Draw me—we will run!*"

In asking to be *drawn*, we seek an intimate union with the object that has led our heart captive. If iron and fire were endowed with reason, and the iron could say: "*Draw me!*" would this not prove its wish to be identified with the fire to the point of sharing its substance? Well, such is precisely my prayer. I ask Jesus to draw me into the fire of His Love, and to unite me so closely to Himself that He may live and act in me. I feel that the more the fire of love consumes my heart, the more frequently shall I cry: "*Draw me!*" and the more also will those souls who come in contact with mine *run swiftly in the sweet odour of the Beloved*.

They will run—yes, we shall run together, for souls that are on fire can never remain inactive. They may certainly, like St. Mary Magdalen,

¹ John vi. 4

² Matt. vii. 8.

³ John xvi. 23.

The Apostle of Prayer

sit at the feet of Jesus listening to His sweet and burning words, but though appearing to give Him nothing, they give far more than Martha, who was "*troubled about many things.*"¹ It is not, of course, Martha's work that Our Lord blames, for His own Blessed Mother humbly devoted herself to the self-same duty, having to prepare the meals for the Holy Family. What He does blame is Martha's excessive solicitude.

The power of prayer has been understood by all the Saints, and especially, perhaps, by those who have illumined the world with the light of Christ's teaching. Was it not in prayer that St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, and so many other friends of God, acquired the wonderful knowledge which has enthralled the loftiest minds?

"Give me a lever and a fulcrum on which to lean it," said Archimedes, "and I will lift the world." But what this scientist could not obtain because his request had merely a material end without reference to God, the Saints have obtained in all its fulness. The Almighty has given them as a fulcrum to lean upon, Himself—*Himself alone*—and for a lever, the prayer that inflames with the fire of love. And thus they have uplifted the world—thus do the Saints who still combat on earth continue to raise it and will continue to raise it till the end of time.

¹ Luke x. 41.

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It now remains for me to tell you, dear Mother, what I understand by the *sweet odour of the Beloved*. Since Our Lord is in Heaven I can only follow Him by the traces full of light and fragrance which He has left behind Him. But as soon as I open the Holy Gospels, I breathe the perfume exhaled by the life of Jesus, and I know which way to run. It is not to the highest place but to the lowest that I hasten. Leaving the Pharisee to go forward, I repeat with all confidence the humble prayer of the publican. Most of all do I imitate the behaviour of Magdalen, for her amazing—or rather I should say her loving—audacity, which delighted the Heart of Jesus, has cast its spell upon mine.

It is not merely because I have been preserved from mortal sin that I lift up my heart to God in trust and in love. I am certain that even if I had on my conscience every imaginable crime, I should lose nothing of my confidence, but would throw myself, my heart broken with sorrow, into the arms of my Saviour. I remember His love for the prodigal son, I have heard His words to St. Mary Magdalen, to the woman taken in adultery, and to the woman of Samaria. No—there is no one who could frighten me, for I know too well what to believe concerning His Mercy and His Love.

In the Lives of the Fathers of the Desert it is told how one of them converted a public sinner

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whose evil deeds were the scandal of the whole country. Touched by grace, the sinful woman followed the Saint into the desert to perform a rigorous penance. On the first night of the journey, before even reaching the place of her retirement, the vehemence of her love and sorrow broke the ties that bound her to earth, and at the same instant the holy man saw her soul borne by Angels to the Bosom of God. This is a striking illustration of what I want to say, but the reality itself is beyond the power of words to express.¹

¹ Here ends the second manuscript, written by the Servant of God for Mother Mary of Gonzaga, who was twice her Prioress. The three MSS—combined into one—were originally published as if addressed to this Reverend Mother. [Ep.]

CHAPTER XIII

A CANTICLE OF LOVE

MY beloved sister,¹ you have asked me to leave you some token, and with our Mother's permission I am glad to talk awhile with you who are doubly my sister, with you who lent me your voice when I could not speak, promising in my name that I would serve Jesus only. The child who writes these lines to-night, dear godmother, is the child whom you offered to Our Lord and who loves you as a child loves its mother. In Heaven only will you be able to fathom the gratitude that fills my heart.

You wish to learn the secrets which Jesus confides to your godchild, and yet I know these secrets are already yours, for it was you who taught me to listen to His teaching. I will try, however, to tell you something, though only too conscious how impossible it is for human speech to put into words what the heart itself can scarcely realise.

Do not think that I am overwhelmed with consolations. Far from it! My joy consists in

¹ This chapter reproduces the third manuscript of Sœur Thérèse, which was addressed to her eldest sister Marie—Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart. [CARMEL.]

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being deprived of all joy here on earth. Jesus does not guide me openly; I neither see nor hear Him. Nor is it through books that I learn, for I do not understand what I read. Yet at times I am consoled by some chance words, such as the following, which I read this evening after a meditation passed in utter dryness. "Here is the Master I give thee, He will teach thee all that thou shouldst do. I wish to make thee read in the Book of Life wherein is contained the *science of love*." ¹ The science of love—how sweetly do these words re-echo in my soul! I wish for no other knowledge and like the Spouse in the Canticle of Canticles, "*having given up all the substance of my house for love, I reckon it as nothing*." ² I understand clearly that through love alone can we become pleasing to God, and my sole ambition is to acquire it.

Jesus deigns to point out to me the only way which leads to Love's divine furnace, and that way is self-surrender: it is the confidence of the little child who sleeps without fear in its father's arms. Through the mouth of Solomon, the Holy Ghost has said: "*Whosoever is a little one, let him come unto me*," ³ and elsewhere the same Spirit of Love declares that "*to him that is little, mercy is granted*." ⁴ In His name, too, the Prophet Isaias reveals how on the last day the

1 Our Lord to Blessed Margaret Mary.

2 Cant. viii. 7.

3 Prov. ix. 4.

4 Wisdom vi. 7.

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Lord *"shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather together the lambs with His arm, and shall take them up into His bosom."*¹

And as though all these proofs were insufficient, the same Prophet, whose inspired gaze penetrated the depths of eternity, cried out: *"Thus saith the Lord: 'You shall be carried at the breasts and upon the knees they shall caress you. As one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you.'"*²

O my beloved sister, after such words one can only be silent and weep for very love. If all weak and imperfect souls such as mine felt as I do, none would despair of reaching the summit of the mountain of Love, since Jesus does not look for deeds, but only for gratitude and self-surrender.

Does He not say: *"I will not take the he-goats from out of thy flocks, for all the beasts of the forest are mine, the cattle on the hill and the oxen. I know all the fowls of the air. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof. Shall I eat the flesh of bullocks, or shall I drink the blood of goats? Offer to God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving."*³

This is all Our Lord claims of us. He needs our love, He has no need of our works. True, the same God who declares He has no need to tell us if He be hungry, did not disdain to beg

¹ Is. xl. 11.

² Is. lxvi. 12, 13.

³ Ps. xlix. 9-14.

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a little water from the Samaritan woman, but when He said: "*Give me to drink,*"¹ He, the Creator of the Universe, was asking for the love of His creatures. He thirsted, indeed, but He thirsted for love.

And Our Divine Lord's thirst is more intense to-day than ever. Among the disciples of this world He meets with nothing but indifference and ingratitude, and alas! among *His own* how few are the hearts that surrender themselves without reserve to the infinite tenderness of His Love.

Happy indeed are we who are privileged to understand the intimate secrets of Our Divine Spouse. If you would but set down in writing all you know, what beautiful pages would be given us to read! But you prefer to keep *the secrets of the King*² hidden in the depths of your heart . . . To me you say it is "*honourable to reveal and confess the works of God,*"³ yet I think you do well to keep silent, for no words of earth can communicate the secrets of Heaven.

As for me, after writing page upon page, I should still feel I had not yet begun. So varied is the outlook, so infinite the number of tints, that the palette of the Divine Painter will alone be able, when the night of this life has passed, to supply me with the colours needed to portray the wonders my soul describes.

Since, however, my dearest sister, you have

¹ John iv. 7.

² Cf. Tob. xii. 7.

³ Tob. xii. 7.

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expressed the wish to penetrate into the sanctuary of my heart, and to have in writing an account of the most consoling dream of my life, together with my "little doctrine" as you call it, I will comply with that wish in the following pages. I will address myself to Our Lord, for by so doing I shall be better able to set down my thoughts. You may find my expressions somewhat exaggerated, but I assure you there is no exaggeration whatsoever in my heart—there all is peace and calm.

O my Jesus, how tenderly and how gently Thou dost lead my soul! . . .

The storm had raged within me since Easter, the glorious feast of Thy triumph, until, in the month of May, there shone through the darkness of my night one clear ray of Thy grace.

While dwelling on the mysterious dreams which Thou dost sometimes send to Thy favoured ones, I thought that such consolations were not meant for me, for in my soul it was always night, darkest night. Then I fell asleep amid the fury of the storm.

The following morning, May 10, at the first glimmer of dawn, I dreamt I was walking in a gallery alone with our Mother when suddenly, without understanding how they had entered, I perceived three Carmelites, wearing their mantles and long veils. I knew they came from Heaven

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and I thought how glad I should be if I could only see the face of one of them. As if my wish had been heard, the tallest of the three Saints advanced towards me. I fell upon my knees and an inexpressible joy took possession of me as she raised her veil, or rather, threw it round me.

Without a moment's hesitation I recognised our Venerable Mother Anne of Jesus, foundress of Carmel in France.¹ Her face was of an unearthly beauty: no rays came from it, and yet in spite of the thick veil which enveloped us, I could see it suffused by a soft light which seemed to emanate from her. She caressed me most tenderly and finding myself the object of such affection I took courage to say: "Dear Mother, I entreat you, tell me, will Our Lord leave me much longer in this world? Will He not come soon to fetch me?" Smiling sweetly, she answered: "Yes, soon . . . very

¹ The Venerable Mother Anne of Jesus—Anne of Lobera—was born in Spain in 1545. She entered the Carmelite Order in 1570 in the first convent of St. Joseph of Avila, and shortly afterwards became the counsellor and coadjutor of St. Teresa, who called her, "her daughter and her crown." St. John of the Cross, who was her spiritual director for fourteen years, described her as "a seraph incarnate," and her prudence and sanctity were held in such esteem that the most learned men consulted her in their doubts, and accepted her answers as oracles. She was always faithful to the spirit of St. Teresa, and had received from Heaven the mission to preserve the primitive spirit of perfection in the Reformed Carmels. Having founded three convents of the Reform in Spain, she established it in France and in Belgium. She died in the odour of sanctity in the Carmel of Brussels on March 4, 1621. On May 3, 1878, His Holiness Pope Leo XIII signed the Decree introducing the Cause of her Beatification. [CARMEL.]

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soon . . . I promise you." "Dear Mother," I asked again, "does He want more from me than these poor little acts and desires that I offer Him? Is He pleased with me?" Our Venerable Mother's face then shone with a fresh splendour and her expression became indescribably more gracious as she answered: "God asks nothing more of you; He is pleased, very pleased"—and taking my head between her hands she kissed me so lovingly that no words can convey the sweetness of her embrace. My heart was full of joy, and remembering my Sisters I was about to beg some favour for them, when, alas! I awoke.

I cannot express the happiness that filled my soul. Months have now passed since this wonderful dream, yet its memory has lost nothing of its freshness or its heavenly charm. I can still see the loving smiles of the holy Carmelite and feel her fond caress. "*O Jesus! Thou didst command the wind and the storm, and there came a great calm.*"¹

On waking, I realised that Heaven does indeed exist—a Heaven peopled with those who cherish me as their child. This impression still remains, and is all the more sweet because up to that time I had no devotion to the Venerable Mother Anne of Jesus; I had never sought her help, nor thought of her unless I heard her

¹ Cf. Matt. viii. 26.

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name, which was seldom. Now I know how constantly I was before her mind, and the remembrance of this increases my love not only for her but for all those in my Father's Home.

O my Beloved! this was but the prelude of yet greater graces which Thou didst will to heap upon me. Let me remind Thee of them to-day, and forgive my folly if I venture once more to tell Thee my longings and hopes that border on the infinite—forgive me, and that my soul may be healed, do Thou, I beseech Thee, fulfil all its desires!

* * * * *

To be Thy spouse, O my Jesus, to be a daughter of Carmel, and by my union with Thee to be the mother of souls, should not all this content me? Yet other vocations make themselves felt, and I would wield the sword, I would be a Priest, an Apostle, a Martyr, a Doctor of the Church, I would fain accomplish the most heroic deeds—the spirit of the Crusader burns within me and I would gladly die on the battlefield in defence of the Church.

The vocation of the Priesthood! With what love, my Jesus, would I bear Thee in my hand when my words brought Thee down from Heaven! With what love, too, would I give Thee to the faithful! And yet, with all my longing to be a priest, I admire and envy the

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humility of St. Francis of Assisi¹ and feel myself drawn to imitate him by refusing that sublime dignity. How reconcile these opposite desires?

Like the prophets and doctors, I would be a light unto souls. I would travel the world over to preach Thy name, O my Beloved, and raise on heathen soil the glorious standard of the Cross. One mission alone would not satisfy my longings. I would spread the Gospel in all parts of the earth, even to the farthest isles. I would be a missionary, but not for a few years only. Were it possible, I should wish to have been one from the world's creation and to remain one till the end of time.

But the greatest of all my desires is to win the martyr's palm. Martyrdom was the dream of my youth, and the dream has only grown more vivid in Carmel's narrow cell. Yet this too is folly, since to slake my thirst for suffering, not one, but every kind of torture would be needful.

Like Thee, O my Adorable Spouse, I would be scourged, I would be crucified! I would be flayed like St. Bartholomew, plunged into boiling oil like St. John, or, like St. Ignatius of Antioch, ground by the teeth of wild beasts into a bread worthy of God.²

1 This great Saint remained a Deacon until his death. [ED.]

2 An allusion to the beautiful words of the Martyr, St. Ignatius of Antioch, uttered when he heard the roar of the lions in the Roman arena. "I am the wheat of Christ; let me be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may become pure bread." [ED.]

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With St. Agnes and St. Cecilia I would offer my neck to the sword of the executioner, and like Joan of Arc murmur the name of Jesus at the burning stake.

When I think of the fearful torments awaiting Christians at the time of Anti-Christ, my heart thrills within me and I wish those torments could be reserved for me. Open, O Jesus, the Book of Life, in which are written the deeds of all Thy Saints: each one of those deeds, I long to accomplish for Thee.

To folly such as this, what answer wilt Thou make? . . . Is there on earth a soul more feeble than mine? Yet precisely because of my feebleness Thou hast been pleased to grant my least, my most childish desires, and now Thou dost will to realise those others more vast than the Universe.

* * * * *

These aspirations becoming a real martyrdom, I one day sought relief in the Epistles of St. Paul and my eyes lighted on the 12th and 13th chapters of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. There I read that all cannot become apostles, prophets, and doctors: that the Church is composed of different members: that the eye cannot also be the hand.

The answer was clear, but it neither satisfied my longing nor brought me the peace I sought.

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"Then descending into the depths of my nothingness, I was so lifted up that I reached my aim."¹ Without being discouraged I read on and found comfort in this counsel: "*Be zealous for the better gifts. And I shew unto you a yet more excellent way.*"²

The Apostle then explains how all the better gifts are nothing without Love, and that Charity is the most excellent way of going in safety to God. At last I had found rest.

As I meditated on the mystical Body of Holy Church I could not recognise myself among any of its members described by St. Paul, or was it not rather that I wished to recognise myself in all? Charity gave me the key to *my vocation*. I understood that since the Church is a body composed of different members, she could not lack the most necessary and most nobly endowed of all the bodily organs. I understood, therefore, that the Church has a *heart*—and a heart on fire with love. I saw, too, that love alone imparts life to all the members, so that should love ever fail, apostles would no longer preach the Gospel and martyrs would refuse to shed their blood. Finally, I realised that love includes every vocation, that love is all things, that love is eternal, reaching down through the ages and stretching to the uttermost limits of earth.

Beside myself with joy, I cried out: "O Jesus, my Love, my vocation is found at last—*my*

¹ St. John of the Cross.

² 1 Cor. xii. 31.

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vocation is love!" I have found my place in the bosom of the Church, and this place, O my God, Thou hast Thyself given to me: in the heart of the Church, my Mother, *I will be Love!* . . . Thus shall I be all things and my dream will be fulfilled.

But why say: "beside myself with joy," when it is rather peace that has become my portion, the calm, quiet peace of the sailor as he catches sight of the beacon which lights him to port. O luminous beacon of Love! I know how to reach even unto thy fires, I have found out the secret of making them my own!

I am but a weak and helpless child, but my very weakness makes me dare to offer myself, O Jesus, as victim to Thy Love. In olden days only pure and spotless holocausts would be accepted by the Omnipotent God, nor could His Justice be appeased save by the most perfect sacrifices; but now that the law of fear has given way to the law of love, I have been chosen, though a weak and imperfect creature, as Love's victim. And is not the choice a fitting one? Most surely, for in order that Love may be wholly satisfied, it must stoop even unto nothingness and transform that nothingness into fire.

"*Love is repaid by Love alone.*"¹ Well do I know it, my God! And therefore I have sought and have found a way to ease my heart by giving

¹ Motto of Sœur Thérèse, from St. John of the Cross. [ED.]

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Thou love for love. "*Use the riches that make men unjust, to find yourselves friends who may receive you into everlasting dwellings.*"¹ This is the advice Thou gavest to Thy disciples after complaining that "*the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.*"²

I was a child of light, and I understood that my desires of being all things, and of embracing every vocation, were riches that might well make me unjust; so I employed them in the making of friends. Mindful of the prayer of Eliseus when he asked the Prophet Elias for his double spirit, I presented myself before the company of the Angels and Saints, and spoke to them thus: "I am the least of all creatures, I know my worthlessness, but I also know how noble and generous hearts love to do good. Therefore, O blessed inhabitants of the Heavenly City, I entreat you to adopt me as your child. All the glory you may help me to acquire will be yours, deign then to hear my prayer and obtain for me a *double portion* of your love for God."

I dare not try to understand all that my prayer means, O my God! I should fear to be crushed by the mere weight of its audacity. That I am Thy *child* is my only excuse, for children do not grasp the full meaning of their words. Yet, if their parents were to mount a throne and inherit vast wealth, they would not hesitate to grant

¹ Cf. Luke xvi. 9.

² Luke xvi. 8.

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the desires of their little ones, who are dearer to them than life itself. To please them they would spend most lavishly, stooping even to weakness.

But the Church is a queen because she is Thy spouse, Divine King of Kings, and I am a child of Holy Church. I do not ask for riches or glory, not even for the glory of Heaven—that belongs by right to my brothers the Angels and Saints. My own glory will be the reflection of the radiance that streams from the brow of my Mother, the Church. But I ask for *love*. One thought is mine henceforth, dear Jesus, it is to *love Thee!* Great deeds are forbidden me. I can neither preach the Gospel nor shed my blood . . . but what does it matter? My brothers labour in my stead while I, *a little child*, stay close to the Throne and love Thee for all those who are in the strife.

But how shall I show my love, since love proves itself by deeds? I, the little one, will strew flowers, perfuming the Divine Throne with their fragrance. I will sing Love's canticle in silvery tones. Thus will my short life be spent in Thy sight, O my Beloved! To strew flowers is the only means of proving my love, and these flowers will be each word and look, each little daily sacrifice. I wish to make profit out of the smallest actions and do them all for Love. For Love's sake I wish to suffer and to rejoice; so shall I strew my flowers. Not one that

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I see but, singing all the while, I will scatter its petals before Thee. Should my roses be gathered from amid thorns, I will sing notwithstanding, and the longer and sharper the thorns, the sweeter will grow my song.

But of what avail to Thee are my flowers and my songs, dear Jesus? . . . Of what avail? I know well that this fragrant shower, these petals of little price, these songs of love from a poor little heart like mine, will nevertheless be pleasing to Thee. They are but trifles, it is true, yet Thou wilt smile on them. The Church Triumphant, stooping towards her child, will gather up these scattered rose-leaves, and, placing them in Thy divine hands, that they may acquire an infinite value, will shower them on the Church Suffering to extinguish the flames, and on the Church Militant to make her triumph.

My Jesus, I love Thee! I love my Mother the Church, and I bear in mind that "the least act of pure love is of more value to her than all other works together."¹ But does this pure love really exist in my heart? Are not my boundless desires mere dreams, mere folly? If so, I beseech Thee, enlighten me, for Thou knowest I seek only the truth. If my desires be too bold, deliver me from them and from this most grievous of all martyrdoms. Yet I confess that

¹ St. John of the Cross.

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should I fail to reach one day the heights to which my soul aspires, I shall have tasted more sweetness in my martyrdom, in my folly, than I shall taste in eternal bliss—unless by a miracle thou shouldst take from me all memory of the hopes I cherished upon earth. Jesus! Jesus! if the mere desire of Thy Love awaken such delight what must it be to possess and enjoy it for ever?

How can a soul so imperfect as mine aspire to the plenitude of Love? What is the key to this mystery? O my only Friend!—why dost Thou not reserve these infinite longings for lofty souls, for the eagles that soar in the heights? Alas! I am only a little unfledged bird. Yet the eagle's spirit is mine, and notwithstanding my littleness I dare to gaze upon the Divine Sun of Love, I burn to dart upwards unto its fires. Fain would I fly as the eagle does, but I can only flutter my wings—it is beyond my feeble strength to soar.

What then is to become of me? Must I die of sorrow because of my helplessness? Oh, no! I will not even grieve. With daring confidence, and reckless of self, I will remain there till death, my gaze fixed upon the Divine Sun. Nothing shall affright me, neither wind nor rain; and should impenetrable clouds conceal from my eyes the Orb of Love, should it seem to me that beyond this life there is darkness only, this would be the hour of perfect joy, the hour in

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which to urge my confidence to its uttermost bounds, for knowing that beyond the dark clouds my Sun is still shining, I should never dare to change my place.

O my God, thus far do I understand Thy Love for me, but Thou knowest how often I lose sight of what is my only care, and straying from Thy side allow my wings to be draggled in the muddy pools of this world. Then "*I cry like a young swallow*"¹ and my cry tells Thee all, and Thou dost remember, O Infinite Mercy, that "*Thou didst not come to call the just, but sinners.*"²

Yet, shouldst Thou still remain deaf to the plaintive cries of Thy feeble creature, shouldst Thou still veil Thyself, I am content to remain benumbed with cold, my wings bedraggled, and once more I would rejoice in such well-merited suffering. O Divine Sun, I am happy to feel myself so small and frail in Thy presence, and my heart is at peace . . . for I know that all the eagles of Thy celestial court have pity on me, that they guard and defend me, putting to flight the vultures—the demons that would fain devour me. I fear not these demons, for I am not destined to be their prey, but the prey of the Divine Eagle.

O Eternal Word! O my Saviour! Thou art the Divine Eagle whom I love and who allurest me. Thou who, descending to this

¹ Isa. xxxviii. 14.

² Cf. Matt. ix. 13.

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land of exile, didst will to suffer and to die, in order to bear away each single soul and plunge it into the very heart of the Blessed Trinity—Love's eternal Home! Thou who returning to Thy realm of light, dost still remain hidden here in our vale of tears under the semblance of the white Host to nourish me with Thy own substance. Forgive me, O Jesus, if I tell Thee that Thy Love reacheth even unto madness, and at the sight of such folly what wilt Thou but that my own heart should leap up to Thee? How could my trust know any bounds?

I know well that for Thy sake the Saints have made themselves foolish—being “eagles” they have done great things. Too little for such mighty deeds, my folly lies in the hope that Thy Love accepts me as a victim, and in my confidence that the Angels and Saints will help me to fly unto Thee with Thy own wings, O my Divine Eagle! As long as Thou wilt I shall remain with my gaze fixed upon Thee, for I long to be *fascinated* by Thy divine eyes, I long to become Love's prey. I am filled with the hope that one day Thou wilt swoop down upon me, and bearing me away to the source of all Love, wilt plunge me at last into its glowing abyss, that I may become for ever its happy victim.

O Jesus! would that I could tell all *little souls* of Thy ineffable condescension! If by any

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possibility Thou couldst find one weaker than mine, one which should abandon itself with perfect trust to Thy Infinite Mercy, I feel that Thou wouldst take delight in loading that soul with still greater favours. But whence these desires, O my Spouse, to make known the secrets of Thy Love? Is it not Thou alone who hast taught them to me and canst Thou not likewise reveal them to others? I know that Thou canst and I beseech Thee to do so . . .

I BESEECH THEE TO CAST THY GLANCE UPON A VAST NUMBER OF LITTLE SOULS, I ENTREAT THEE TO CHOOSE IN THIS WORLD A LEGION OF LITTLE VICTIMS WORTHY OF THY LOVE.

END OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

EPILOGUE

A VICTIM OF DIVINE LOVE

“**M**ANY pages of this story”—said its writer—
“will never be read upon earth.” There are sufferings which may not be disclosed here below, Our Lord having jealously reserved to Himself the right to reveal their merit in the vision where all veils shall be drawn aside. The sufferings of Sœur Thérèse were nearly all of this hidden nature, insomuch that to many her life may seem to have been a story of smiles and caresses—the story of a flower that has seen only spring-day suns, but has not lived through autumn rains or wintry blasts. On the contrary, the Servant of God suffered intensely, and towards the close of her life she suggested that the fact should be made known after her death, well aware that the seal of the cross would be for many the authentic sign of her mission.

It was not, however, this searching martyrdom of the heart which made her think that the offering of herself as a *Victim of God's Merciful Love* had been accepted. She felt assured of the acceptance of the holocaust because of the “floods of love overflowing into her soul from the Heart of God.” It is true that in answer to the needs of certain of His spouses who were not sufficiently pliable in the Divine Hands, she once said: “to offer ourselves as Love's victim is to lay ourselves open to every kind of pain.” But she also said to another

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soul which seemed to her the figure of regenerated humanity thirsting after perfection yet trembling at the sight of the cross: "Why fear to offer yourself as a victim to God's Merciful Love? If it were to His Divine Justice you might have reason to fear, but the *Merciful Love* will have pity on your weakness and will treat you with tenderest *mercy*."

We have seen how great was her sacrifice in leaving her dearly-loved home. Some may think that the companionship of her two sisters in the convent made the sacrifice less painful. Instead of this, their presence afforded the young postulant many occasions for repressing her affection—a form of self-denial most keenly felt. The rules of solitude and silence were strictly observed and she saw her sisters only at recreation. Had she been less mortified she might often have sat beside them, but no one could remark in her any special affection for them, since "by preference she sought the company of those religious who were least agreeable to her."

Some time after she entered, her appointment as "aid" to Sister Agnes of Jesus brought fresh occasions of sacrifice. Sœur Thérèse knew that all unnecessary conversation was forbidden and therefore she never allowed herself the slightest word in the way of personal confidences. "O my dear Mother," she said later, "how much I suffered then! . . . I could not open my heart to you and I thought you no longer knew me." After five years of this heroic silence Sister Agnes of Jesus was chosen as Prioress. On the evening of the election her child might well have rejoiced that henceforth she could speak freely and as of old pour out her soul. God permitted, however, that of all the

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community Sœur Thérèse saw least of her who was now "doubly her Mother." So strong was her sense of the supernatural, that on her deathbed she declared herself "happy to die in the arms of another Prioress, in order to exercise more fully her spirit of faith in authority."

She wished to live the life of the Carmel with all the perfection required by St. Teresa, and when her work did not necessarily absorb her attention the thought of God presented itself quite naturally. On one occasion, a novice entering her cell was struck by the heavenly expression of her countenance. Though sewing most industriously she seemed lost in contemplation. "What are you thinking of?" the young Sister asked. "I am meditating on the 'Our Father,'" Thérèse replied. "It is so sweet to call God 'Our Father!'" . . . and tears glistened in her eyes. Another time she was heard to say: "I cannot understand what more I shall have in Heaven than I have now; I shall see God, it is true, but, as to being with Him, our union is already complete."

On another occasion she related the following incident: "A few days after the oblation of myself to God's Merciful Love¹ I was in the choir, beginning the Way of the Cross, when suddenly I felt myself wounded by a dart of fire so ardent that I thought I should die. I cannot describe the transport, and no comparison would convey an idea of the intensity of the flame. It seemed as though an invisible force plunged me wholly into fire . . . But what fire! what sweetness!"

When the Mother Prioress asked her if this were the first rapture she had experienced, she answered quite

¹ The text is given in *Prayers by Sr. Thérèse*: Orphans' Press: 1d.

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simply: "I have had several transports of love, and one in particular during my novitiate when I remained for a whole week far removed from the world. It is impossible for me to explain it, but it seemed as though I went about my work with a body other than my own, and that a veil had been cast over all earthly things. But I was not then consumed by a real flame; I was able to bear it all, without hope of seeing the ties that bound me to life give way under the weight of joy; whilst on the occasion of which I speak, one minute—one second—more and my soul must have left the body . . . Alas! I found myself again on earth and spiritual dryness once more took possession of my heart." Jesus had withdrawn the fiery dart,¹ but the wound was unto death, and for the Victim of Love the "*eternal weight of glory*" was not to be long delayed.

Through this close union with Almighty God she acquired a remarkable mastery over self, while in the garden of her soul every virtue flourished. Let us not imagine, however, that all these flowers grew and blossomed without effort on her part.

"In this world there is no fruitfulness without suffering—either physical pain, anguish of soul, or trials

¹ The great St. Teresa of Avila (Spain), reformer of the Carmelites, who completed her autobiography in 1562 at the command of her confessor, gives there an account of the following vision. "I saw an angel very near me in corporal form, an unusual thing, for though angels are often represented to me it is only by intellectual vision. He was rather small and very beautiful, and his face shone so brilliantly that he appeared to be one of the seraphim who look all on fire with divine love. He had in his hand a long golden dart—tipped, I thought, with fire—which he seemed to me to thrust several times through my heart, leaving me wholly inflamed with a great love of God."

The Saint died in 1582, and while her body lies incorrupt at Alba de Tormes, her heart, bearing distinctly the mark of the fiery dart, is preserved at Avila. Her *Story of my own Life* is considered the most important work of its kind after the *Confessions of St. Augustine*. [Ed.]

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known sometimes only to God. When good thoughts and generous resolutions have been the result of our reading the lives of the Saints, we ought not to content ourselves, as in the case of profane books, with paying a certain tribute of admiration to the genius of their authors—rather should we consider the price which, doubtless, they paid for the supernatural good produced in our souls.”¹

And, if to-day “*the little Saint*,” as she is so often styled, transforms countless hearts in an amazing way, if the good she does on earth is beyond reckoning, we may well believe she bought it all at the price with which Jesus bought back our souls—suffering and the cross. Not the least of these sufferings was the war she waged against herself, refusing every satisfaction to the demands of her naturally proud and impetuous nature. While still a child she had acquired the habit of never excusing herself or making a complaint, and in Carmel she strove to be the servant of her Sisters in religion, endeavouring in the same spirit of humility to obey all without distinction.

One evening, during her illness, the community had assembled in the garden to sing a hymn before an altar of the Sacred Heart. Sœur Thérèse, who was already wasted by fever, joined them with difficulty, and arriving quite exhausted was obliged to sit down. When the hymn began, one of the Sisters made her a sign to stand. Without hesitation the humble child rose, and in spite of the fever and great oppression from which she was suffering, remained standing to the end.

The infirmarian had advised her to take a little walk in the garden for a quarter of an hour each day, and

¹ Dom Guéranger.

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this recommendation was for her a command. Noticing one afternoon how much the effort cost the invalid, a Sister said to her: "Sœur Thérèse, you would do much better to take a rest; walking can do you no good when you are suffering so much, you are only tiring yourself." "That is true," she replied, "but do you know what gives me strength? I offer each step for some missionary, thinking that somewhere far away, one of them is worn out by his apostolic labours, and to lessen his fatigue I offer mine to God."

One year the Sisters' relatives, as also the servants of the convent, had sent bunches of flowers for the Mother Prioress's feast. Thérèse was arranging them with great taste when a lay-sister said to her crossly: "It is easy to see that these larger bouquets were sent by your family; of course, those sent by the poor will be hidden behind!" A sweet smile was the only reply, and notwithstanding the displeasing effect she put the flowers given by the servants in the most conspicuous place. Struck with admiration, the lay-sister went at once to the Prioress to accuse herself of her unkindness and to praise the humility shown by Sœur Thérèse. When after the latter's death the body was laid out, this Sister touched the sacred remains with her forehead, once more asking forgiveness of her fault. At the same instant she felt herself cured of a cerebral anæmia which had for years prevented her from applying herself either to reading or to mental prayer.

Far from avoiding humiliations, Sœur Thérèse sought them with eagerness, and it was in this way she came to offer herself as "aid" to a Sister who was well known to be difficult to please. The proposal was accepted and one day, after she had been tried by a great deal of fault-

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finding, a novice asked her why she looked so bright. Great was the novice's surprise on receiving the reply: "It is because Sister N. has just been saying disagreeable things to me. She has made me so happy! I wish I could meet her now so that I might give her a smile." . . . She was still speaking when the Sister in question knocked at the door and the astonished novice could see for herself how the Saints forgive. But *Sœur Thérèse* soared so far above earthly things that humiliations served only to strengthen her.

To all these virtues she joined an unflinching courage. From her entrance into Carmel, at the age of fifteen, she was allowed to follow all the practices of its austere Rule, the fasts alone excepted. Sometimes her companions in the novitiate, seeing how pale she looked, tried to obtain a dispensation for her either from attendance at Matins, or from rising at the usual hour in the morning, but the Mother Prioress¹ would never yield to these requests. "A soul of such mettle," she would say, "ought not to be dealt with as a child; dispensations are not meant for her. Let her be, for God sustains her. Besides, if she be really ill she should come and tell me herself." But it was always a principle with *Thérèse* that "we should go to the end of our strength before we complain." How many times did she not assist at Matins suffering from vertigo or violent headaches! "I am still able to walk," she would say, "and so I ought to be at my post." Thanks to this undaunted energy, she performed acts that were heroic.

It was with difficulty that her delicate stomach accustomed itself to the frugal fare of Carmel.² Certain dishes

¹ Rev. M. Mary of Gonzaga who died December 17, 1904. [CARMEL.]

² Carmelites never touch meat. [ED.]

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made her ill, but she knew so well how to hide this fact that no one ever suspected it. One of the Sisters who sat near to her at table tells how she had tried in vain to discover the dishes Sœur Thérèse preferred. The kitchen Sisters, too, finding her easy to please, invariably served her to whatever was left, and it was only during her last illness, when she was put under obedience to say what disagreed with her, that her mortifications came to light. After admitting how she had been tried, she added: "When Our Lord will have us suffer, there can be no evading it. For instance, when Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart ¹ was procuratrix she looked after me with a mother's tenderness. To all appearances I was pampered, and yet endless were the mortifications she imposed upon me by serving me according to her own taste which was entirely different from mine."

Thérèse's spirit of self-sacrifice extended to everything; she always sought what was painful and disagreeable as her rightful share, and all that God asked of her she gave Him without hesitation or reserve. "During my postulanship," she confessed, "it cost me a great deal to perform certain exterior penances customary in our convents, but I never yielded to my repugnance, for it seemed as though from the great crucifix in our garden Christ looked at me with beseeching eyes and begged these sacrifices." Her vigilance was such that she never failed to observe any little recommendations of the Mother Prioress, or any of the smaller rules which render the religious life so meritorious. Having remarked her extraordinary fidelity on this point, one of the old nuns regarded her ever afterwards as a Saint.

¹ Marie, her eldest sister.

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Inspired by the Holy Ghost with the knowledge that mortification of the mind and heart sanctifies much more surely than bodily penances, Thérèse practised but few of these beyond such as were prescribed by the Rule. It happened, nevertheless, that she fell ill through having worn for too long a time a small penitential cross, the sharp iron points of which had entered into her flesh. "Such a trifle would not have caused this," she said, "if God had not wished to make me understand that the great austerities of the Saints are not meant for me or for the little souls who are to walk by the same path of spiritual childhood."

It was the want of a fire in winter that caused her the greatest physical suffering, and it is easy to understand how a delicate constitution such as hers would be tried by the long Norman winters and the damp climate of Lisieux. When the temperature was lower than usual and she had spent the day half-frozen with cold, she would go in the evening, after Matins, to warm herself for a few moments in the community-room. To make her way thence to her cell, she had to walk some sixty yards in the open air, under the cloisters, then, climbing the staircase, traverse a long icy corridor, so that by the time she reached her room the little heat she had so grudgingly allowed herself to gain was utterly lost. As she lay on her straw mattress, with two thin blankets for covering, sleep came to her only in snatches. Sometimes indeed it happened that she would pass the entire night shivering without ever falling asleep. If, from the beginning, she had told the Novice Mistress, a remedy would at once have been provided, but she preferred to accept this stern penance without uttering a complaint. It

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was only on her death-bed that she revealed it, in these expressive words: "Throughout my religious life the cold has caused me more physical pain than anything else—I have suffered from cold until I almost died of it."

Though in her spirit of generosity she had embraced this austere penance with joy, she subsequently made known under obedience that such excessive suffering, though permitted by God, was not willed by Him, and that in future it would be well to guard against it. She considered that while the Rule should be enforced, differences of latitude and of constitution should be studied, and that to act otherwise was to sin against prudence and to tempt God.

* * * * *

The reader will remember the call on Good Friday, April 3, 1896, when, to use her own expression, she heard "the distant murmur which announced the approach of the Bridegroom;" But before the hour of her deliverance was to sound, long months of pain had still to be endured. On Good Friday morning she made so little of the hemorrhage of the previous night that the Mother Prioress, blind to the real state of things, allowed her to practise all the penances the Rule prescribes for that day. In the afternoon, when a novice saw her cleaning a window, her face was livid, and in spite of the energy displayed it was evident that her strength was almost spent. At the sight of such exhaustion the novice, who dearly loved her young mistress, burst into tears and begged permission to obtain for her some little reprieve, but Sœur Thérèse strictly forbade it, saying she was well able to bear

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this slight fatigue on the day when Our Lord had suffered so much for her. It was only in May, 1897, that her own sisters knew of this first warning, and when Mother Agnes of Jesus gently reproached her for keeping silent, the invalid exclaimed: "My poor little Mother, you must thank God I did not tell you, for had you been aware of my state and seen me so little cared for, your heart would have been very sore."

Soon, a persistent cough made the Mother Prioress feel anxious; she ordered the sufferer a more strengthening diet and for some months the cough ceased. "Sickness is too slow a liberator," said Sœur Thérèse, "I can rely only on Love." Strongly tempted to respond to an appeal from the Carmelites of Hanoï, who were most desirous of possessing her, she began a novena to the Venerable Théophane Vénard¹ to obtain her cure, but instead of getting better, she took a serious turn for the worse.

Like her Divine Master she had "*passed through the world doing good*;" like Him she had been forgotten, and misunderstood, and now, still following in His footsteps, she was to climb the painful hill of Calvary. Accus-

¹ The Blessed Théophane Vénard was born at St. Loup, in the diocese of Poitiers, on the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lady, Nov. 21, 1829. He was martyred at Kecho, Tong-King, on the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord, Feb. 2, 1861, at the age of 32. A long and delightful correspondence with his family, begun in his college days and completed from his "cage" at Kecho, reveals a kinship of poesy as well as of sanctity and of the love of home between the two "spring flowers." The beauty of his soul was so visible in his boyish face that he was spared all torture during his two months in the "cage." In 1909, the year in which Thérèse became "Servant of God" by the commencement of the Episcopal Process, her patron received the honours of Beatification. Another child of France—Joan, its "Martyr-Maid"—whose praises have been sung in affectionate verse by the Saints of St. Loup and Lisieux, was beatified that same year. [Ed.]

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tomed to see her always suffering yet always brave, the Mother Prioress allowed her to take part in the community exercises, some of which caused her extreme fatigue. At night she would courageously mount the stairs alone, pausing at every step to take breath. When after much difficulty she at last reached her cell, she was so exhausted that sometimes, as she admitted later, it took her an hour to undress. After all this exertion it was on a hard pallet that she had to take her rest. Her nights were very bad, and on being asked if she would not like some help during those hours of pain, she replied: "Oh, no! I am only too glad to be in a cell where the Sisters cannot hear me. I am delighted to suffer alone—the moment I receive sympathy and am loaded with attentions I am no longer happy."

It often happened that painful remedies had to be applied to her side, and one day, having suffered from them more than usual, she was resting in her cell during recreation, when she overheard a Sister in the kitchen saying: "Sœur Thérèse will not live long, and really I wonder sometimes what our Mother Prioress will find to say about her when she dies.¹ She will be greatly puzzled, for though the little Sister is very good she has certainly never done anything worth speaking about." The infirmarian, who had also overheard what was said, turned to Thérèse and remarked: "If you relied on the opinion of creatures you would certainly be disillusioned to-day." "The opinion of creatures!" she replied, "happily God has given me the grace to be absolutely indifferent to it. Let me tell you some-

¹ An allusion to the obituary notice sent to each of the French Carmels when a Carmelite nun dies in France. In the case of those who die in the odour of sanctity these notices sometimes run to considerable length. [Ed.]

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thing that showed me once and for all how much it is worth. A few days after my clothing I went to our Mother's room. 'Mother,' remarked a lay-sister who happened to be there, 'this novice certainly does you credit. How well she looks! I hope she may long be able to observe the Rule.' I was feeling really pleased at the compliment when another Sister came in, and looking at me, said: 'Poor Sœur Thérèse, how very tired you look, you quite alarm me. If you continue like this I am afraid you will not be able to keep the Rule very long.' I was then only sixteen, but the incident made such an impression on me, that I never again set store on the variable opinion of creatures."

On another occasion someone remarked: "They say that you have never suffered much." With a smile she pointed to a glass in which there was some medicine of a bright red colour. "Do you see this little glass?" she said. "One would suppose it contained a most delicious draught, whereas in reality it is more bitter than anything I take. Well, it is the image of my life. To others it has been all rose colour; they imagine that I have drunk of a most delicious wine, but to me it has been full of bitterness. I say bitterness, yet, after all, my life has not been sad, because I have learned to find joy and sweetness in all that is bitter." "You are suffering just now, are you not?" "Yes," she answered, "but I have longed so much to suffer."

"How sorry we are," said her novices, "to see you in such pain, and to think you may have even more to suffer." "Do not grieve," she replied, "it has come to this, that I can no longer suffer, because all suffering is sweet. Besides it is a great mistake to

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worry as to what trouble there may be in store; it is like meddling with God's work. We who run in the way of Love must never allow ourselves to be disturbed by anything. If I did not simply suffer from one moment to another, it would be impossible for me to be patient; but I look only at the present, I forget the past, and I take good care not to forestall the future. When we yield to discouragement or despair it is usually because we give too much thought to the past and to the future. Pray for me, however; often, when I cry to Heaven for help it is then I feel most abandoned."

"How do you manage," continued the novices, "not to give way to discouragement when you are forsaken in this way?" "I turn to God, and to all His Saints and I thank them notwithstanding; I believe they want to see how far I shall trust them. But the words of Job have not entered my heart in vain: *'Even if God should kill me, I would still trust Him.'*¹ I admit that it has taken a long time to arrive at this degree of self-abandonment; but I have reached it now, and it is Our Lord Himself who has brought me there."

"Our Lord's will," she confessed, "fills my heart to the brim, and if anything else be added it cannot penetrate to any depth, but, like oil on the surface of limpid waters, glides easily across. If my heart were not already brimming over, if it needed to be filled by the feelings of joy and sadness that follow each other so rapidly, then indeed it would be flooded by bitter sorrow; but these quick-succeeding changes scarcely ruffle the surface of my soul, and in its depths there reigns a peace that nothing can disturb." Yet her soul

¹ Cf. Job xiii. 15.

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was enveloped in thick darkness, and her temptations against Faith, always conquered but always returning, robbed her of all feeling of happiness at the thought of her approaching death. "Were it not for this trial, which is impossible to understand," she would say, "I think I should die of joy at the thought of soon leaving the world." By this means, however, the Divine Master wished to put the finishing touches to her purification, and thus enable her not only to walk rapidly, but to run in her little way of confidence and abandonment. Have we not her own words for it? "I desire neither death nor life. Were Our Lord to offer me my choice, I would not choose. I only will what He wills, and I am pleased with whatever He does. I have no fear of the last struggle, or of any pain, however great, which my illness may bring. God has always been my help; He has led me by the hand since I was a child and I count on Him now. Even though suffering should reach its furthest limits I am certain He will never forsake me."

Her confidence in God of necessity roused the fury of the devil, who at life's close tries by every ruse to sow the seeds of despair in the hearts of the dying. "Last night I was seized with a terrible feeling of anguish," she once said to Mother Agnes of Jesus. "I was lost in darkness and from out of it came an accursed voice: 'Are you certain God loves you? Has He come to tell you so Himself? The opinion of a few creatures will not justify you in His sight.' These thoughts had long tortured me, dear Mother, when your little note came like a message from Heaven. You recalled the special graces Jesus had lavished on me, and, as though you had been given a revelation concerning

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my trial, you told me I was dearly loved by God, and was on the eve of receiving from His hands my eternal crown. Peace and calm revived in my heart. Then the thought occurred that it was perhaps your affection which prompted you to write thus. Straightway I was inspired to take up the Gospels, and opening the book at random, I lighted upon a passage which had hitherto escaped me: *'He whom God hath sent, speaketh the Words of God, for God doth not give the Spirit by measure.'*¹ I fell asleep, fully consoled. It is you, dear Mother, whom God has sent me, and I must believe you, because your words are the Words of God."

For several days during the month of August she seemed, so to speak, beside herself, and implored that prayers might be offered for her. We had never before seen her in such a state, and we heard her constantly repeating: "If people only knew how necessary it is to pray for those in their agony!" One night she entreated the infirmarian to sprinkle her bed with Holy Water, saying: "The devil is beside me. I do not see him but I feel him; he torments me, holding me with a grip of iron that I may not find one crumb of comfort, and adding to my sufferings that I may be driven to despair . . . And I cannot pray. I can only look at Our Blessed Lady, I can only say, 'Jesus!' How necessary is that prayer we use at Compline :

'Far off let idle visions fly,
No phantom of the night come nigh!'

Something mysterious is happening within me. I am

¹ John iii. 34.

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not suffering for myself but for some other soul, and Satan is angry." The startled infirmarian lighted a blessed candle, and the spirit of darkness fled, never to return; but until the end the sufferer remained in a state of extreme anguish.

One day while she was contemplating the beautiful heavens, some one said to her: "Your home will soon be there, beyond the blue sky. How lovingly you look at it!" She only smiled, but afterwards she said to Mother Agnes of Jesus: "Mother, the Sisters do not realise my sufferings. Just now, when I was looking at the sky, I was merely admiring the beauty of the material heaven—the real Heaven seems more than ever closed against me. At first their words troubled me, but an interior voice whispered: 'Yes, you were looking to Heaven out of love. Since your soul is entirely delivered up to love, all your actions, even the most indifferent, are marked with this divine seal.' I was consoled immediately."

In spite of the darkness which enveloped the Servant of God, Our Divine Saviour sometimes left the door of her prison ajar and in those moments her soul was consumed in transports of confidence and love. Once when she was walking in the garden, supported by one of her own sisters, she stood still to watch a little white hen sheltering its chickens under its wing. Her eyes filled with tears and turning to her sister she remarked: "I cannot remain here any longer, let us go in!" Even when she reached her cell the tears continued to fall, and it was some time before she could speak. At last she said, looking at her sister with a heavenly expression: "I was thinking of Our Lord and of the touching comparison He chose in order to

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bring home to us how tender He is. All my life long He has done that for me—He has completely hidden me under His wing. I cannot tell you all that has just stirred my heart; it is indeed well for me that God conceals Himself, only rarely allowing me to see the effects of His Mercy, and, as it were, from ‘behind the lattices.’¹ Otherwise I could never survive the sweetness.”

* * * * *

Unable to resign ourselves to the thought of losing our treasure, we began a fervent novena to Our Lady of Victories, June 5, 1897, in the hope that once again she would miraculously raise the drooping Little Flower. But her answer was the same as that given by the blessed martyr, Théophane Vénard, and we were forced to accept the bitter prospect of an approaching separation. At the beginning of July, her state became very serious, and she was at last removed to the infirmary. Looking at the empty room to which she knew her sister would never return, Mother Agnes of Jesus remarked: “When you are no longer with us, how sad I shall feel as I look at your cell!” “For consolation, little Mother, you must think of how happy I am in Heaven, and remember that a great deal of my happiness was acquired in this cell; for,” she added, raising her beautiful eyes to Heaven, “*I have suffered so much in it that I should be glad to die there.*”

The miraculous statue of Our Lady had been brought to the infirmary, and as Sœur Thérèse entered the room her eyes turned towards it. It would be

¹ Cant. ii. 9.

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impossible to describe that look. "What is it you see?" asked her sister Marie, who had witnessed her miraculous cure as a child. "Never has she seemed to me more beautiful", answered the invalid, "but to-day it is the statue, whereas that other day you know well it was not!" "How I love Our Blessed Lady!" she exclaimed one evening. "How I would have sung her praises had I been a priest! She is spoken of as unapproachable, whereas she should be represented as imitable . . . She is more Mother than Queen! I have heard preachers say her splendour eclipses that of all the Saints as the rising sun makes the stars disappear. How strange that a mother should take away the glory of her children! I think quite the contrary will happen, I am certain she will greatly add to the splendour of God's redeemed . . . Our Mother Mary! How simple was her life!" and Thérèse went on to draw a picture of the Holy Family such that all present were lost in admiration.

Before going to join her Spouse a heavy trial awaited her. From August 16 till the day of her death, September 30, she was unable to receive Holy Communion because of her continual sickness. Yet few have hungered for the Bread of Angels as did this seraph of earth; again and again during the last winter of her life she had heroically risen at an early hour to partake of the Heavenly Manna, even after nights spent in almost intolerable pain. No price was too high for the bliss of being united to her God. Previous to the great trial of being deprived of her Divine Food, Our Lord visited her often upon her bed of suffering. Her Communion on July 16, feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, was particularly touching. During the previous

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night she composed the following lines which were to be sung before she received the Blessed Sacrament:

“Thou know'st the baseness of my soul, O Lord,
Yet fearest not to stoop and enter me.
Come to my heart, O Sacrament adored !
Come to my heart . . . it craveth but for Thee !
And when 'Thou comest, straightway let me die
Of very love for 'Thee; this boon impart !
Oh, hearken, Jesus, to my suppliant cry:
Come to my heart !”

In the morning, when the Holy Viaticum was carried to the infirmary, the cloisters were thickly strewn with rose-petals and wild flowers. A young priest, who was to say his first Mass that same day in the chapel of the Carmel, bore the Blessed Sacrament to the dying Sister, while at her request, Sister Mary of the Eucharist—whose voice was exceptionally sweet—sang the following couplet from a favourite hymn composed long before:

“Sweet martyrdom ! to die of love's keen fire:
The martyrdom of which my heart is fain !
Hasten, ye Cherubin, to tune your lyre;
I shall not linger long in exile's pain !

· · · · ·
Fulfil my dream, O Jesus, since I sigh
Of love to die.”

A few days later the dear invalid grew worse, and on July 30 she received the Last Anointing. Radiant with delight she said to us: “The door of my dark prison is ajar; I am overcome with joy, especially since our Father Superior has assured me that to-day my soul is like that of a little child after Baptism.”

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Two long months of martyrdom, however, had yet to run their course. "I entreat you, Mother, give me leave to die," she said to the Prioress. "Let me offer my life for such an intention"—which she named. And when the permission was refused, she replied: "Well, I know that just at this moment Our Lord has such a longing for a little bunch of grapes, which no one wants to give Him, that He will perforce have to come and steal it . . . I ask for nothing—that would be to stray from my path of self-surrender. All I do is to beseech Our Lady to remind Jesus of the title of *Thief*, which He takes to Himself in the Gospels, so that He may not forget to come and steal me away."

* * * * *

One day she took from a sheaf that had been brought her, an ear of corn so laden with grain that it bent on its stalk. After gazing upon it for some time she said to the Mother Prioress: "That ear of corn, dear Mother, is the image of my soul, which God has loaded with graces for me *and for many others*, and it is my earnest desire to bend always beneath the weight of His gifts, acknowledging that all comes from Him."¹

She was right. Her soul was indeed laden with graces, and it was easy to discern the Spirit of God speaking His praises out of the mouth of the innocent child. Had not the same Spirit of Truth dictated these words to the great Saint Teresa of Avila:

"Let those souls who have reached to a perfect union with God hold themselves in high esteem, with a humble and holy presumption. Let them keep unceasingly before their eyes the remembrance of the good

¹ Hence the ear of corn on the cover of this volume. [Ed.]

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things they have received, and beware of the thought that they are practising humility in not recognising the gifts of God. Is it not clear that the constant remembrance of gifts bestowed serves to increase the love for the giver? How can he who ignores the riches he possesses spend them generously upon others?"

But the above was not the only occasion upon which "little Thérèse of Lisieux"¹ gave utterance to words that proved prophetic. In the month of April, 1895, while she was still in excellent health, she confided to one of the elder nuns that she would soon die. "I do not say that it will be in a few months, but in two, or three years at most; I know it by what is taking place in my soul." At times, to the novices' surprise, she read their intimate thoughts. "This is my secret," she told them; "I never reprimand you without first invoking Our Blessed Lady, asking her to inspire me with whatever will be for your greatest good. Often I am myself astonished at what I say, but as I say it I feel I make no mistake, and that it is Jesus who speaks by my lips." During her illness, one of her own sisters had experienced some moments of acute distress, amounting almost to depression, at

¹ When asked before her death how they should pray to her in Heaven, Sœur Thérèse made answer with her wonted simplicity: "You will call me 'Little Thérèse'—*petite Thérèse*." And at Gallipoli (Italy) on the occasion of her celebrated apparition in the Carmel there, when the Prioress took her to be St. Teresa of Avila, and addressed her as "our Holy Mother," the visitor replied, adopting her official title, "Nay, I am not our Holy Mother, *I am the Servant of God, Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*." This, her own name of Sœur Thérèse, has been retained in the present translation, except where it was advisable to set down her name in full—Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face. The name of the "Little Flower," borrowed by her from the Blessed Théophane Vénard, and used so extensively in the pages of her manuscript, is the one by which she is best known in English-speaking lands. [Ed.]

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the thought of the inevitable parting. She went straight to the infirmary but was careful not to betray any sign of grief, and what was her surprise when the sufferer said to her in a sad and serious tone: "We ought not to weep like those who have no hope." "How happy I should be," thought one of our Mothers who had done her some trifling service on the occasion of a visit, "if this saint would only say, 'I will repay you in Heaven!'" Simultaneously, Sœur Thérèse turning to her said: "Mother, I will repay you in Heaven!"

She had an evident consciousness of the mission on which Our Lord had sent her. The veil shutting out the future seemed lifted, and more than once she revealed to us its secrets, in prophecies which have already been realised: "I have never given God anything but love," she said to us, "it is with love He will repay:

AFTER MY DEATH

I WILL LET FALL A SHOWER OF ROSES."

At another time she interrupted a Sister who was speaking to her of the happiness of Heaven, by these sublime words: "It is not that which attracts me." "What is it, then?" asked the Sister. "Oh! it is Love! *To love, to be loved, and to return to earth to win love for our Love!*"¹ One evening when Mother Agnes of

¹ "You will look down on us from Heaven," they said to her. "No!" she replied, "*I will come down.*" That promise has been kept repeatedly during the past 18 years, by her visits to the tempted, the suffering, and the dying. Often, too, her presence has been distinctly felt, without any apparition being visible, and the spiritual grace or temporal favour follows, authenticating the "visit." At other times it is merely a sudden perfume of flowers, or incense, or some heavenly fragrance, that precedes or accompanies one of her innumerable "roses." In her autobiography, however, Sœur Thérèse declares that she herself had no desire for such supernatural communications. [ED.]

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Jesus went to the infirmary, Sœur Thérèse welcomed her with an extraordinary expression of joy: "Mother!" she said, "some notes from a distant concert have just reached my ears, and there has come to me the thought that soon I shall be listening to the sweet melodies of Paradise. This thought, however, gave me only a moment's joy, for one hope alone makes my heart beat fast—the love I shall receive and the love I shall be able to give! I feel that my mission is soon to begin—to make others love God as I love Him . . . to teach souls my *little way* . . .

I WILL SPEND MY HEAVEN
IN DOING GOOD UPON EARTH.

This is not impossible, for the Angels keep watch over us while they enjoy the Beatific Vision. No, there cannot be any rest for me till the end of the world—till the Angel shall have said: '*Time is no more.*'¹ Then I shall take my rest, then I shall be able to rejoice, because the number of the elect will be complete."

"And what is the '*little way*' that you would teach?" asked Mother Agnes of Jesus.

"IT IS THE WAY OF SPIRITUAL CHILDHOOD,
THE WAY OF TRUST AND ABSOLUTE SELF-SURRENDER.

I want to point out to souls the means that I have always found so completely successful, to tell them there is only one thing to do here below—to offer Our Lord the flowers of *little sacrifices* and win Him by our caresses. That is how I have won Him, and that is why I shall be made so welcome."

¹ Apoc. x. 6.

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"Should I misguide you by my *little way* of love," she told her novices, "do not fear that I shall allow you to continue following it; I should very soon come back to earth and tell you to take another road.¹ But if I do not return, then believe in the truth of these words: *We can never have too much confidence in our God who is so mighty and so merciful. As we hope in Him so shall we receive.*"

On the eve of the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, a novice said to her: "If you were to die to-morrow, after Holy Communion, I think I should be quite consoled—it would be such a beautiful death!" "Die after Holy Communion!" she answered quickly, "upon a great feast! No, such will never be my lot. Little souls could never imitate me in that. In my 'little way' everything is most ordinary, for all I do must likewise be within their reach."

When, as often happened, roses were sent to her she would pluck their petals one by one, touching her crucifix lovingly with each. Once when some of these precious relics fell to the ground she said to us: "Gather up those petals carefully, they will serve one day to give pleasure to others. Do not lose a single one." They have served indeed not only to give pleasure, but to work miracles.

Another time she said to her "little Mother": "In

¹ On January 16, 1910, during the first of her series of "visits" to the starving Carmelites of Gallipoli, in Italy, she said to the Prioress: "*My way is sure, and I was not mistaken in following it.*" From January to August gifts of money, miraculously conveyed, proved to a strict court of enquiry that Sœur Thérèse had indeed "come down." On January 16, 1911, she again sent a large sum to the Carmel of Gallipoli, approving in this way the Bishop of Nardo's interpretation of the words quoted above. See "*As Little Children*," (Orphans' Press—4d.), for a full account of the apparitions. [Ed.]

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Heaven I shall obtain many graces for those who have been kind to me. As for you, Mother, all I send will not suffice to repay you, but there will be much to make you rejoice."

A certain Sister had doubts as to the invalid's patience, but going to see her one day, and noticing that her face wore an expression of unearthly joy, she sought to know the reason. "It is because the pain is so acute," replied the Servant of God; "I have always forced myself to love suffering and to welcome it gladly."

"When I suffer much," she would say, "when painful and disagreeable things come my way, instead of looking sad I greet them with a smile. At first I did not always succeed, but now it has become a habit which I am truly glad to have acquired."

"Why are you so bright this morning?" asked Mother Agnes of Jesus. "Because of two little crosses I have received," she answered. "Nothing gives me such joy as 'little crosses' do." And on another occasion: "You have had many trials to-day?" "Yes, but I love them! . . . I love everything God in His goodness sends me." "Your sufferings are terrible!" "No, they are not terrible: can a victim of Love find anything terrible that is sent by her Spouse? At each moment He sends me what I am able to bear—nothing more—and if He increase the pain my strength is also increased. But I could never ask for greater sufferings—I am too little a soul; besides, being of my own choice I should have to bear them without His help, and when left to myself I have never been fit for anything."

Thus spoke the wise and prudent virgin as she lay

1 Cf. Prov. xix. 11.

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on her death-bed; her lamp, filled to the brim with the oil of virtue, burned brightly to the end. If, as the Holy Spirit reminds us in the Book of Proverbs: "*A man's doctrine is proved by his patience,*"¹ those who heard her may well believe in her doctrine, for she proved it by a patience which no test could overcome. At each visit the doctor expressed his admiration, assuring us that her sufferings were intense and that he had never seen anyone endure similar pain with such an expression of supernatural joy. We told him of our grief at the prospect of losing our treasure, but he replied: "I shall not be able to cure her, she was not made for this world." In view of her extreme weakness he ordered some strengthening remedies, and because of their cost Sœur Thérèse was at first distressed, but afterwards she admitted: "I am no longer troubled at having to take these expensive medicines, for I have read that when they were given to St. Gertrude she was gladdened by the thought that it would all redound to the good of her benefactors, since Our Lord has said: '*Whatever you do to the least of My little ones, you do unto Me.*'"¹ "I am convinced that no remedies have the power to cure me," she added, "but I have made a covenant with God that they may be for the benefit of poor missionaries who have neither time nor means to take care of themselves."

Touched by the thoughtfulness of His spouse, Our Lord, who will never allow His generosity to be outdone, surrounded her with His loving attentions. At one time it would be in the form of flowers sent by some member of her family, at another in that of a little robin who would come and hop about

¹ Matt. xxv. 40.

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her bed. "Mother," she would then say, "I feel deeply all these delicate proofs of God's love. Outwardly I am laden with them . . . nevertheless I remain in the deepest gloom! . . . I am suffering intensely—most intensely—and yet amid it all I am in a state of extraordinary peace. All my longings have been realised . . . I am full of confidence." Shortly after this she related the following incident: "One evening, during the 'Great Silence,' when I was in high fever and parched with thirst, the infirmarian put a hot-water bottle to my feet and tincture of iodine on my chest. Whilst submitting to these remedies I could not help saying to Our Lord: 'My Jesus, Thou seest I am already burning, and they have brought me more heat and more fire. If instead, they had given me even half-a-glass of water, what comfort it would have been! My Jesus! Thy child is very thirsty! She is glad, however, to have this opportunity of resembling Thee more closely and thus of saving souls.' Presently the infirmarian left me, and I did not expect to see her again until morning. What then was my surprise when she returned with a refreshing drink! 'It has just struck me,' she said, 'that you may be thirsty, so for the future I shall bring you this every evening.' I looked at her in astonishment, and when I once more found myself alone, I could not keep back my tears. How good Our Lord is! How tender and loving! How easy it is to touch His Heart!"

On September 6, Sœur Thérèse received a proof of the love of the Divine Heart—a proof which sank deeply into her own. She had frequently expressed the wish to possess something which had belonged to her sainted friend, the Blessed Théophane Vénard, but

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finding that nothing came of her desire she said no more. That day, however, we received, quite providentially, a relic of the saint, and when the Mother Prioress brought her the coveted treasure she kissed it repeatedly, and would not part with it. It may be wondered why Thérèse was so devoted to this young martyr. In an affectionate interview with her own sisters she explained her reason. “Théophane Vénard,” she said, “is a *little* Saint, and his life is quite ordinary. He had an ardent love of our Immaculate Mother, and likewise a great love for those at home.” Dwelling on these last words, she added: “And I, too, love my family with a most tender love; I fail to understand those Saints who do not love their dear ones. As a parting gift, I have copied for you some passages from his last letters home. His soul and mine resemble each other, and his words re-echo my thoughts.” We give here a copy of the letter, which might well have been composed by herself:

“Nothing on earth can make me happy, for the desires of my heart are too vast, and nothing of what the world calls happiness can satisfy it. Time for me will soon be no more; my thoughts are fixed on Eternity, and my heart is full of peace, like a tranquil lake or a cloudless sky. Thirsting for the waters of Life Eternal, I leave the world without regret. Yet a little while and my soul will have quitted this earth, will have finished her exile, will have ended her combat. Heaven is won. I am about to enter the abode of the Blessed—to see what eye hath never seen, to hear what ear hath never heard, to enjoy those things which the heart of man hath not conceived.

“I have reached the hour so coveted by us all. It is indeed

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true that God chooses *the little ones* to confound the great ones of the world, nor do I rely upon my own strength but upon Him who, on the Cross, vanquished the powers of hell. I am a spring flower which the Divine Master gathers for His pleasure. We are all flowers, planted upon earth, and God will gather us in His own good time—some sooner, some later . . . I, a little flower of one day, am the first to be taken! But we shall meet again in Paradise, where we shall enjoy unending bliss.

“SISTER TERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS,
using the words of the angelic martyr—Théophane Vénard.”

Towards the end of September, when someone repeated to her a remark made at recreation concerning the responsibility of those who are entrusted with the care of souls, she seemed to revive for a few minutes and gave utterance to these beautiful words: “‘*To him that is little, mercy is granted.*’¹ It is possible to remain *little* even in the most responsible position, and besides is it not written that at the last day ‘*The Lord will arise and save the meek and lowly ones of the earth*’?² He does not say ‘to judge’ but ‘to save!’”

Meanwhile the tide of pain was rising higher and higher, and Sœur Thérèse became so weak that she was unable to make the slightest movement without assistance. Even when those about her spoke in whispers it added greatly to her suffering, and the fever and oppression were so extreme that it was only with the greatest difficulty she could articulate a word. Yet a sweet smile was always on her lips. The one fear that would bring a cloud was lest she should give the Sisters any extra trouble, and until two days before

¹ Wisdom vi. 7.

² Cf. Ps. lxxv. 10.

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her death she would never allow anyone to remain with her through the night. In spite of her entreaties, however, the infirmarian looked in from time to time. Finding her, on one of these occasions, with hands joined and eyes raised to Heaven, she asked: "What are you doing? You ought to try and get some sleep." "I cannot, Sister, I am suffering too much, so I pray." "And what do you say to Jesus?" "I say nothing—I love Him!"

"How good God is!" she often exclaimed. "He must indeed be very good to give me strength to bear all that I am enduring." One evening she sent to the Mother Prioress the following lines written in pencil with a trembling hand: "O my God! how good Thou art to the little victim of Thy Merciful Love! Even now, when Thou dost add these bodily pains to those of my soul, I cannot bring myself to say: '*The anguish of death hath encompassed me.*'"¹ Rather do I cry out in my gratitude: '*I have gone down into the valley of the shadow of death, but I fear no evil because Thou, O Lord, art with me!*'"²

Mother Agnes of Jesus once told her that some were under the impression that she was afraid of death. "That may easily come to pass," she replied; "I do not rely on my own feelings, for I know my frailty. But I wish to enjoy all the peace God gives me now, it will be time enough to bear that cross, if it come. When the chaplain asked me if I were resigned to die, I told him I needed more resignation to live, and that the thought of death brought me nothing but joy. If in my last moments I suffer a great deal and show no sign of peace, let it not trouble you, dear Mother. Did not Our Lord Himself die a victim of love? Yet

¹ Cf. Ps. xvii. 5.

² Cf. Ps. xxii. 4.

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see how great was His agony !”

On the day before her death, September 29, at about nine o'clock in the evening, she and her youngest sister Céline (Sister Genevieve of St. Teresa), heard a fluttering of wings in the garden, and soon after, a turtle-dove from some unknown quarter lighted on the window-sill, where it remained for a considerable time, cooing all the while. Both sisters were deeply moved as they recalled the words: “*The voice of the turtle is heard in our land: . . . Winter is now past . . . arise my love . . . my beautiful one, and come !*”¹

* * * * *

At last the day broke that was to be for Sœur Thérèse the dawn of Eternity. On the morning of Thursday, September 30, 1897, her eyes fixed on Our Lady's statue, she thus referred to her last night on earth: “Oh! with what fervour I have prayed to her! . . . And yet it has been sheer agony, without a ray of consolation . . . Earth's air is failing me; when shall I breathe the air of Heaven?”

At half-past two she raised herself in bed, which she had been unable to do for weeks, and exclaimed: “Mother, the chalice is full to overflowing! I could never have believed it possible to suffer so intensely . . . I can explain it only by my great longing to save souls . . .” And a little while after, she added: “All that I have written of my thirst for suffering is really true. *I have no regret for having surrendered myself to Love.*” These last words she repeated several times, and a little later she continued: “Mother, prepare me to die a good death.” The Mother Prioress encouraged

¹ Cant. ii. 10, 11, 12.

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her with the words: "My child, you are quite ready to appear before God because you have always understood the virtue of humility." Then in these striking terms the martyr of Divine Love bore witness to herself: "Yes, I feel that my soul has never sought anything but the truth . . . I have understood humility of heart!" At half-past four, as she gave signs of entering on her agony, the community was summoned. From the moment our saintly child saw the Sisters gather round her she thanked them with the sweetest smile; then, clasping the crucifix in her failing hands, she concentrated on the final combat all the powers of her soul. The sweat of death lay thick on her brow, and the "victim" trembled . . . but as a pilot, when close to harbour, is not dismayed by the fury of the storm, so this brave heart, strong in faith, saw close at hand the beacon lights of Heaven and valiantly put forth every effort to reach the shore. As the convent bell rang the evening *Angelus*, she gazed with inexpressible tenderness upon the statue of the Immaculate Virgin—Star of the Sea. It was the moment to repeat her beautiful prayer:

"O thou who can'st to smile on me, in the morning
of my life,
Come, Mother, once again and smile—for lo! 'tis
eventide!"¹

A few minutes after seven, turning to the Prioress, she asked: "Mother is not this the agony? Am I not going to die?" "Yes, my child, it is the agony, but it may be that Jesus wills it should be prolonged for some hours." "Very well, then"—she answered

¹ From the last poem written by Sœur Thérèse. [Ed].

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sweetly—"very well . . . be it so . . . Ah! I do not wish to suffer less." And looking at her crucifix she continued: "*Oh! . . . I love Him! . . . My God, I . . . love . . . Thee!*"

These were her last words. Scarcely had she uttered them, when to our great surprise her whole frame drooped quite suddenly, the head inclined a little to the right, in the attitude of the Virgin Martyrs offering themselves to the sword; or rather as a Victim of Love, awaiting from the Divine Archer the fiery shaft by which she longs to die. All at once she raised herself, as though called by a mysterious voice, and opening her eyes, which shone with unutterable joy, she fixed her gaze a little above the statue of Our Lady and so remained for about the space of a *Credo*, when her blessed soul, the prey of the "Divine Eagle," was borne away to the heights of Heaven.

* * * * *

A few days before, Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus had said: "The death of love I desire is that of Jesus upon the Cross." Her wish was fully granted, for darkness and bitter anguish were the lot of her soul throughout her last agony. Yet may we not apply to her also, that sublime prophecy of St. John of the Cross, referring to souls consumed by the fire of Divine Love?

"They die victims of the onslaughts of love, in raptured ecstasies—like the swan, whose song grows sweeter as death draws nigh. Wherefore the Psalmist declares: '*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints.*'"¹ For then it is that the rivers of love

¹ Ps. cxv. 15.

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burst forth from the soul and are lost in the ocean of Divine Love.”

No sooner had the soul of the sufferer taken flight than the joy of that last rapture imprinted itself on her brow and a celestial smile illumined her face. In her hand we placed a palm-branch, the same green branch which thirteen years later was found fresh and intact in the coffin when her sacred remains were exhumed.¹ Simultaneously there began to occur in the convent certain extraordinary incidents of which the following may be mentioned as examples. The first—already alluded to—is that of a lay-sister who on kissing the feet of the Servant of God was instantly cured of cerebral anæmia. Another nun was favoured with a very strong perfume of violets; while a third felt herself thrilled by a kiss bestowed on her by some invisible being. One Sister perceived a bright light in the heavens, and another saw a luminous crown which, rising from the earth, was soon lost in space.

All through the Saturday and Sunday people kept defiling past the grating of the nuns' chapel to pay a final tribute to the “Little Flower of Jesus.” Hundreds of rosaries, medals, and even trinkets, were made to touch the “little Queen” as she lay in the majestic beauty of her last sleep. Amongst the crowd was a

¹ The remains of the Servant of God were exhumed, for better preservation, on September 6, 1910, in presence of the entire Episcopal Tribunal of the Beatification. As she foretold, nothing was found of her body but the bones, yet the palm-branch mentioned above was perfectly preserved and may be seen at the Carmel. (A full account of the ceremony, and of the “roses” which accompanied it, is given in “*As Little Children*.”) It would seem as if God wished to emphasise her words: “*Jesus! Oh, I would so love Him! Love Him as He has never yet been loved! I desire at all costs to win the palm of St. Agnes; if it cannot be mine through the shedding of blood, it must be by Love.*” [Ed.]

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child of ten who perceived a strong perfume of lilies, a fact which could not be explained since only artificial lilies adorned the remains.

On the day of the funeral, October 4, there gathered in the chapel of our Carmel a goodly company of priests—an honour most assuredly due to one who had so earnestly prayed for those called to that sacred office. After a last solemn blessing, the hands of Holy Mother Church cast into the furrow this grain of priceless wheat. Since then the words of the Divine Reaper have been magnificently fulfilled: "*Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat, falling into the ground, die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*"¹ Here on earth the fruit more often remains hidden, but in the case of Sœur Thérèse, Our Lord has forestalled the hour of eternal revelation, and desires us to contemplate the splendid harvest ripening all over the globe. Day by day news comes from many lands of the delicate charities from above, of her gracious visits, of her growing legion of little souls, and as the power of her intercession with her Spouse becomes more clear, there goes up from the hearts that love her a warmer tribute of praise to the Divine Mercy, the true fount of all good.

THE CARMEL OF LISIEUX.

¹ John xii. 24, 25.

LETTER.

"THE WORLD AND THE CLOISTER."

Sœur Thérèse to her sister Céline, September, 1894.

DEAREST CÉLINE,—I am so glad that you do not feel any particular attraction at the thought of entering Carmel. This is really a mark of Our Lord's favour, and shows that He looks for a gift from your hands. He knows that it is so much sweeter to give than to receive. What happiness to suffer for Him who loves us even unto folly, and to pass for fools in the eyes of the world! Men judge others by themselves, and, as the world will not hearken to reason, it calls us unreasonable too.

We may console ourselves that we are not the first. Folly was the only crime with which Herod could reproach Our Lord . . . and, after all, Herod was right. It was folly indeed, for the King of Glory, who sitteth above the Cherubim, to seek out thrones for Himself in poor human hearts. Was He not supremely happy in the company of His Father and the Holy Spirit of Love? Why, then, come down on earth in search of sinners and make of them His closest friends? Nay, our folly could never exceed the foolishness of Christ, and our deeds are quite within the bounds of reason by the side of His. The world may leave us alone. I repeat, it is the world that is *insane*, because it will not heed what Jesus has done and suffered to save it from eternal damnation.

We are neither idlers, nor spendthrifts. Our Divine Master has taken our defence upon Himself. Remember the scene in the house of Lazarus: Martha was serving, while Mary had no thought of food but only

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of how she could please her Beloved. And, "*she broke her alabaster box, and poured out upon her Saviour's Head the precious spikenard,*¹ *and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.*"²

The Apostles murmured against Magdalen, and so do men murmur against us. Even fervent Catholics think our ways are exaggerated, and that we ought to wait upon Jesus like Martha, instead of pouring out on Him the odorous ointment of our lives. Yet what does it matter if the ointment-jars be broken, since Our Lord is consoled, and the world in spite of itself is forced to inhale the perfumes they give forth? It has much need of these same perfumes to purify the unwholesome air it breathes.

For a while only, good-bye, dearest sister. Your barque is near to port. The breezes filling its sails are the zephyrs of Love—breezes that speed more swiftly than the lightning-flash. Good-bye! in a few days we shall be together within these Carmel walls . . . and afterwards together in Paradise. Did not Jesus say during His Passion: "*Hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of Heaven*" ?³ . . . We shall be there!

THÉRÈSE.

¹ Cf. Mark xiv. 3.

² John xii. 3.

³ Matt. xxvi. 64.

NOTE. The letters and spiritual counsels of the Servant of God will appear in a further volume. T.N.T.

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SMC

Thirhse, de Lisieux,

Saint, 1873-1897.

A little white flower :

the story of Soeur

AKA-6692



